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Anna Kapitany BSc BA

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a notable paradigm shift in the discourse surrounding sexual health and sexuality (Nimbi et al., 2022). Historically, much of the focus within research, public policy, and clinical practice was placed on the negative aspects of sexuality, such as reproductive health, sexual dysfunctions, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and sexual violence (Andreoli et al., 2024; Landers & Kapadia, 2020). According to Borgmann (2023) this approach often emphasized traditional norms and moral values, thereby marginalizing individual autonomy and overall well-being. At the same time sexuality was largely framed as a private matter, placing the burden of responsibility solely on individuals and consequently leading to internalized feelings of guilt and shame (Borgmann, 2023).

More recently, however, a sex-positive perspective has emerged, challenging these reductionist views (Andreoli et al., 2024; Nimbi et al., 2022). Rather than focusing exclusively on risks, this approach emphasizes a more holistic view of sexuality (Andreoli et al., 2024). Here, topics of sexual pleasure, consent, diversity, and personal empowerment are included, while still addressing critical issues such as reproductive health (Ford et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2021). Importantly, the sex-positive framework recognizes that sexual health is a matter of public interest, thus advocating for comprehensive, inclusive, and accessible sex education (Borgmann, 2023). An essential component is the recognition of sexual pleasure as a central element of sexual health and well-being (Borgmann, 2023; Ford et al., 2019; Laan et al., 2021). Research demonstrates that sexual pleasure is associated with autonomy, self-esteem, empathy, and positive sexual health outcomes, including safer sex practices and effective communication (Ford et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2022). Nevertheless, disparities in the experience of sexual pleasure – so-called pleasure gaps – persist, particularly along gendered lines (Laan et al., 2021). Women report orgasms less frequently than men, experience more discomfort during intercourse and are disproportionately affected by negative or risky sexual encounters (Laan et al., 2021). These inequalities do not stem from biological differences but are largely shaped by sociocultural factors (Mahar et al., 2020; Rubin et al., 2019). Two mechanisms are particularly relevant in explaining these disparities. First, limited clitoral knowledge restricts awareness of sexual practices that reliably support female orgasm, with both men and women demonstrating substantial knowledge gaps in this area (Dienberg et

al., 2023). Second, gendered sexual scripts (GSS) prescribe unequal roles in heterosexual encounters, prioritizing male pleasure and as such undermining women's sexual wellbeing (Klein et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2022).

Despite these theoretical and empirical insights, relatively little is known about how emerging adults navigate these dynamics in their everyday life. As demonstrated in the existing research, sexual literacy is a pivotal factor in challenging restrictive sexual norms (Power et al., 2024). However, it remains unclear how young people approach and internalize information about sexuality, and how this knowledge relates to their sexual pleasure. This question is particularly relevant in the light of current societal shifts. Young people increasingly move between online and offline contexts when engaging with sexual topics (Döring, 2019). Digital platforms are not only used for exploration and communication but also as important sources of sex education (Döring, 2019; Döring et al., 2022). Thus, a research gap emerged.

Considering the impact of sexual literacy, this research aims to shed light on sexual wellbeing in emerging adults. By investigating the interplay between GSS and clitoral knowledge, the present study seeks to understand both negative and positive influences on sexual pleasure. Additionally, the study aims to contribute to expanding the body of research on sexual literacy and sex education. To allow for an exhaustive understanding of the study's thematic focus, first theoretical concepts and prior research will be explored. The theoretical part of this thesis is organized into three thematic sections. First, a holistic definition of sexuality is introduced, followed by an examination of sexual developmental processes during adolescence and emerging adulthood. Building on this, the analysis turns to key societal developments that have significantly reshaped the experience and expression of sexuality in recent decades. The second section focuses on the concept of sexual pleasure. It examines existing pleasure gaps between different population groups and considers both historical biological myths and sociocultural constraints. Two mechanisms are analysed in depth: clitoral knowledge and GSS, both of which play a pivotal role in shaping the unequal distribution of sexual pleasure. Finally, the concept of sexual literacy and its relation to sex education is explored. This section compares traditional sex education programmes with digital educational formats, highlighting their respective opportunities, challenges, and contributions to contemporary, inclusive, and pleasure-oriented sex education. Following the introduction, the *Methods* section reports on the

study design, sampling procedure and instruments used in this research. Subsequently the results are displayed. First, explorative research on sex education will be reported and then the relationship between sexual pleasure, GSS and clitoral knowledge will be examined. In the final chapters the study's findings will be synthesized, related to prior scholarship, and limitations and suggestions for further research are discussed.

2. Sexuality on the way to adulthood

To fully grasp the shift towards a sex-positive approach, it is necessary to adopt a holistic and inclusive understanding of sexuality (Kauer et al., 2024; Rubinsky & Cooke-Jackson, 2018). Sexuality extends well beyond sexual intercourse or biological determinants (Rubinsky & Cooke-Jackson, 2018). Rather it is a multidimensional construct that encompasses biological, psychological, emotional, and sociocultural dimensions (Döring & Mohseni, 2022). As Kapella (2021, p. 40) states, sexuality may occur in partnered contexts – whether with one or multiple partners – or in solo sexual activities and is shaped by both societal influences, such as cultural and religious norms, and individual characteristics. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2006a, as cited in WHO, 2019, Sexuality definition) defines sexuality as “*a central aspect of being human throughout life...*”, encompassing sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction, and being shaped by the interplay of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors.

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of sexuality, it is also important to clearly define the following terms as defined by Cloutier et al. (2021). The term *gender assignment* refers to the “biological sex” determined by doctors at birth based solely on genitalia. *Gender identity* can be defined as those characteristics that develop according to biopsychosocial aspects of gender (e.g., femininity). Whereby the term *cisgender*, on the one hand, refers to those individuals whose *gender identity* and *gender assignment* match. *Gender minority*, on the other hand, refers to those individuals for whom this is not the case. This includes *transgender* identities, i.e., individuals whose gender assignment was male, for example, but who identify as female. Finally, *sexual orientation* refers to whom individuals are romantically or sexually attracted to. *Heterosexuality*, defined as attraction to the opposite gender, is widely regarded as the prevailing standard. In contrast, the term *sexual minority* refers

to individuals who do not conform to this norm, including those who identify as gay, bisexual, or asexual (Cloutier et al., 2021).

In sum, sexuality is a multidimensional construct that is responsive both to societal developments and to individual variability. It plays a significant role in human development and should be approached from an inclusive, dynamic, and context-sensitive perspective. While the development of sexuality is a lifelong process, adolescence and emerging adulthood represent particularly formative phases (Morgan & van Dulmen, 2021). It is during this period that individuals typically engage in their first sexual experiences, which profoundly influence their future approach to sexuality (Bodmer, 2013; Cary & Reese-Weber, 2021; Döring, 2023). Thus, in the following section, these stages in the context of sexuality will be analysed.

2.1. Sexuality in adolescence and emerging adulthood

The analysis of these two phases is divided into three parts. For both phases the typical developmental tasks that characterize each stage will be examined first. This will be followed by a report on current trends regarding sexuality and finally, the impact on later sexuality will be analysed. This chapter lays the groundwork for analysing the relationship between GSS and sexual pleasure in emerging adulthood.

2.1.1. Sexuality in adolescence

Adolescence, as defined by Konrad and König (2018), describes the transition from childhood to adulthood. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019a) it occurs during the ages of 10 and 19 and commences with the onset of puberty. This period is characterized by physiological, emotional, and psychosocial changes that often occur asynchronously, potentially creating tensions amplified by social challenges (Bodmer, 2013; Cary & Reese-Weber, 2021). While biological maturation during this phase enables adolescents, particularly in its later stages, to participate in a wide range of activities and experiences, certain activities – such as voting or financial independence – remain restricted (Cary & Reese-Weber, 2021; Wenglorz & Heinrichs, 2018). These restrictions, as Wenglorz and Heinrichs (2018) note, create a field of tension that can stimulate development but may also entail risks and conflicts. Socially, the focus of reference shifts from the family to the peer group and a significant developmental task is the onset of sexual maturation (Wenglorz & Heinrichs, 2018).

Biologically, puberty is triggered by an increased release of sex hormones (gonadotropins), leading to physical changes such as pubic hair growth, breast and penis enlargement or the onset of menstruation (Konrad & König, 2018). Sex drive also increases, prompting adolescents to engage more sexually (Cary & Reese-Weber, 2021). Sexual development typically unfolds in three stages: autoerotic experiences (e.g., masturbation), non-coital partnered activities (e.g., kissing), and sexual intercourse (vaginal or oral) (Cary & Reese-Weber, 2021; Vierhaus & Wendt, 2018). These stages provide opportunities for adolescents to explore their own preferences and sexual orientation, and to develop the ability to respond to a partner's needs in a consensual manner (Bodmer, 2013; Döring, 2023; Cary & Reese-Weber, 2021).

Since 1980, every 5 years the Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (BZgA) conducts the representative *Jugendsexualität* survey, assessing the sexual and reproductive health of young people in Germany, encompassing their sexual and contraceptive behaviour, as well as their sources of sex education (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). The most recent survey was in 2019 with over 6,000 young people aged 14-25 (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). According to this study, the share of adolescents with heterosexual intercourse experience has not increased in recent decades. Among 15- and 16-year-olds it has even declined, indicating that young people are more sexually restrained than ten years ago (Döring, 2023; Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). Contraceptive use is nearly universal, with only small minorities reporting unprotected intercourse (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). While condom use predominates among younger adolescents, pill use increases with age, though attitudes toward hormonal contraception have become more critical in recent years (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). According to Döring (2023) at age 14, around two-thirds of boys (65%) and about one-quarter of girls (26%) report having masturbated within the past year, with prevalence increasing with age. A clear gender gap exists, as boys both masturbate more frequently and speak about it more openly than girls (Döring, 2023).

Cary and Reese-Weber (2021) highlight the impact sexual behaviour during adolescence has on later sexuality. Sexual risk-taking behaviours – including lack of contraceptive use or combining sexual activity with alcohol or drug use – are heightened by developmental factors such as impulsivity and less stable intimate relationships (Döring, 2023; Morgan & van Dulmen, 2021). However, according to the

authors, positive sexual experiences can equally shape later sexuality. Döring (2023) argues that such experiences can serve as an important source of pleasure and self-determination and foster personal growth. Furthermore, they provide essential foundations for healthy sexual relationships in later life (Cary & Reese-Weber, 2021). Thus, according to Döring (2023), despite the risks, it is important to allow and encourage adolescents to explore their sexuality. Despite missing consensus on the precise effects of communication between adolescents and parents on adolescent sexuality, research conducted by Cary and Reese-Weber (2021) suggests a potential influence of parent-adolescent communication on the tendency of adolescents to seek positive versus negative sexual experiences. The following chapter will address sexuality during emerging adulthood.

2.1.2. Sexuality in emerging adulthood

Emerging adulthood, as introduced by Arnett (2000, 2024) occurs during the ages of 18 and 29 and is characterized by exploration and instability. During this period, individuals often make frequent changes in jobs, places of residence, or partners as they search for their life path in different domains (Morgan & van Dulmen, 2021; Olmstead & Anders, 2021). Each of these transitions offers opportunities for new experiences, including sexual ones (Arnett, 2024; Morgan & van Dulmen, 2021). While negative experiences are also part of this developmental stage, it is marked by numerous formative opportunities that are shaped by social and cultural contexts such as socio-economic status, academic setting, religious background, and work environment (Arnett, 2024). Interpersonal relationships – including those with peers and family members – also influence attitudes and beliefs about sexuality and sexual practices (Morgan & van Dulmen, 2021).

Most emerging adults have already had sexual experiences during adolescence, but the quantity and quality of these experiences vary greatly (Arnett, 2024; Vasilenko, 2021). As reported by Vasilenko (2021) emerging adulthood is typically a time when sexual experiences become more diverse and more frequent. Vaginal intercourse is the most common form of sexual activity: around 50% of 18-year-olds report having had it, compared to 90% of emerging adults (Vasilenko, 2021). The author further states that masturbation generally increases during this phase, as does oral sex – particularly men receiving and women giving. The prevalence of specific sexual practices varies substantially between subgroups, influenced by gender, academic

background, sexual orientation, and race (Vasilenko, 2021). For example, the author states that LGBTQIA+ individuals tend to engage in more diverse sexual practices. In terms of relationship context, Arnett (2024) contradicts the widespread belief that emerging adults frequently engage in one-time casual sex encounters. Although hook-ups and casual sex are relatively common, they often occur with someone the person already knows – such as an ex-partner – and only about 30% of hook-ups result in vaginal intercourse (Arnett, 2024).

How emerging adults express their sexuality is shaped by their moral guidelines and personal values (Lyons & Sanders, 2021). Broadly speaking, individuals with more traditional orientations tend to hold more conventional sexual values, whereas those with more progressive orientations express more liberal sexual attitudes and behaviours (Arnett, 2024). Compared to adolescents, whose sexual values often closely mirror those of their parents, emerging adults show greater divergence from parental attitudes (Lyons & Sanders, 2021). According to the authors, these evolving values and diverse sexual experiences in emerging adulthood contribute to shaping sexual identity, preferences, and relationship patterns in later adulthood. To conclude, adolescence and emerging adulthood represent distinct but interconnected phases of sexual development. Together, these stages form the basis for later sexual identity, preferences, and relationship patterns. Building on this developmental framework, the following chapter analyses how societal changes have shaped sexual norms, behaviours, and values during these formative years.

2.2. Societal development

As mentioned above, sexuality during adolescence and emerging adulthood does not develop in isolation but is shaped by broader societal and cultural contexts (Arnett, 2024; Cary & Reese-Weber, 2021). Over the past decades, profound social changes have transformed how young people experience, express, and negotiate their sexuality (Arnett, 2024; Power et al., 2024). These transformations have expanded opportunities for sexual exploration and self-expression, while simultaneously introducing new challenges and risks (Döring et al., 2022). The following section examines two key societal developments: the changing cultural norms surrounding intimate relationships since the 1960s, and the growing influence of digital media on sexual behaviour and attitudes.

According to Arnett (2024), historically, there has been a strong correlation between sexuality and marriage. Engaging in sexual activity prior to marriage was met with disapproval, and the notion that a single partner should be maintained was considerably more embedded (Arnett, 2024). Thus, according to the author, the sexual revolution of the 1960s brought about a significant change in this image. The introduction of the birth control pill and the legalization of abortion also contributed significantly to this (Arnett, 2024). Today, emerging adulthood is a developmental stage characterized by exploration of potential life choices, including sexual exploration (Arnett, 2024). The concept of sexuality has evolved beyond its traditional role as a component of intimacy in relationships, becoming instead an integral facet of identity formation (Nelson, 2021). Arnett (2024) proposes the concept of "serial monogamy" to describe emerging adults' relationship patterns. While emerging adults may engage in monogamous relationships, they typically experience multiple relationships over time. As such having multiple partners now is being regarded as the prevailing norm rather than the exception (Arnett, 2024). Nevertheless, Arnett (2024) further argues that the precise nature of these regulations remains ambiguous. According to them, emerging adults feel uncertain when confronted with questions about the number of partners they are willing to engage with, as well as the duration of these relationships.

A second change that has had a particular impact on the sexual behaviour of emerging adults in recent years is the influence of modern technologies (Döring et al., 2022). Despite the differences between the two, the online world is inextricably linked to the offline world (Döring, 2019). Today individuals actively use the internet for specific sexuality exploration, as it provides a wealth of information and is also free, discreet and independent of time and location (Döring, 2019; Power et al., 2024).

Similar to the discourse surrounding sexual health, public discussions about sexuality in the digital age often focus predominantly on risks and dangers associated with digital media (Döring, 2019). According to Döring (2019), concerns are frequently raised about rising pornography consumption or the potential of social media platforms to facilitate experiences of harassment or assault. However, the author further critiques this predominantly alarmist rhetoric, noting that it can distort reality and hinder constructive engagement with complex issues. According to them, a one-sided focus on risks may obscure the potential opportunities offered by digital media. Döring (2019) outlines six ways in which young people actively engage with their sexuality in digital

contexts, including the use of online resources for sex education, intimate or sexual communication, and identity exploration. According to them, the internet offers a space in which individuals can seek information, express questions or uncertainties about sexuality, connect with peers, and explore aspects of their identity in a relatively safe and anonymous environment. Likewise, Döring (2019) states that this is especially relevant for individuals belonging to sexual minorities, for whom the online space can serve as an important platform for visibility and self-expression. Nevertheless, the risks associated with digital sexual content must not be overlooked (Döring, 2019). A balanced approach that prioritizes youth protection and media literacy while avoiding overly moralising narratives is required (Döring, 2019; Power et al., 2024). Central to this is the responsibility of online platform providers, as well as the need to equip young people with the competencies required to navigate digital spaces responsibly and confidently (Power et al., 2024).

Beyond shaping sexual experiences, these platforms are increasingly being utilized for educational purposes, creating both opportunities and challenges for promoting sexual literacy (Power et al., 2024). This educational dimension, and its implications for young people's competence, agency, and self-determination, will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.3. Building on this overview of sexuality in adolescence and emerging adulthood, it becomes evident that these developmental phases provide the foundation for later sexual identity, preferences, and relationship patterns. At the same time, the societal transformations outlined above are crucial drivers of the broader shift toward a positive sexual health approach. Against this backdrop, the following chapter turns to the concept of sexual pleasure as an essential yet often overlooked dimension of sexual health, highlighting its role in fostering agency, equality, and overall well-being.

3. Sexual pleasure

Sexual pleasure refers to any positive physical sensations, thoughts and feelings associated with solo and partnered sexual activities (Döring & Mohseni, 2022; Laan et al., 2021). In a review by Laan et al. (2021) the authors argue that it influences not only physical and psychological well-being but also interpersonal relationships and sexual decision-making. As such, their research has demonstrated that it is associated with autonomy, self-esteem and empathy. Furthermore, the authors reported on a positive correlation between sexual pleasure and various sexual health indicators, including condom use, communication regarding STIs, and the resolution of sexual problems

(Laan et al., 2021). Likewise, the promotion of sexual pleasure has been demonstrated to exert a positive influence on the efficacy of sex education (Klein et al., 2022). Thus, sexual pleasure constitutes a fundamental sexual right and acts as an indicator of overall health and well-being (Ford et al., 2019).

However, despite increasing recognition of its importance in recent years, disparities in the experience of sexual pleasure – commonly referred to as *pleasure gaps* – persist across different population groups, particularly along gendered lines (Laan et al., 2021). This chapter first examines the extent and nature of pleasure gaps. Special attention is given to the structural and sociocultural factors that contribute to these disparities, including persistent myths such as the *coital imperative*. Subsequently, biological capacity and sociocultural opportunity structures, as potential determinants of sexual pleasure, will be contrasted. Finally, the discussion turns to two key factors impacting pleasure gaps – namely GSS and clitoral knowledge.

3.1. Understanding pleasure gaps

As mentioned above, pleasure gaps refer to systematic disparities in the experience of sexual pleasure between different population groups (Conley & Klein, 2022; Klein et al., 2022; Laan et al., 2021). In most societies, the concept of female pleasure is frequently marginalized in comparison to that of males (Klein et al., 2022). Laan et al. (2021) mention that especially within heterosexual relationships, women's sexual experiences are generally less positive than men's and often entail higher physical and emotional costs. According to Laan et al. (2021) women's sexual experiences not only differ from men's in terms of pleasure, but they also involve distinct challenges and risks. Consistent with their findings, women experience orgasms less frequently than men, reflecting a disparity in positive sexual experiences. Beyond this, women are more likely to report sexual discomfort during intercourse and face heightened risks in sexual encounters, including hazardous situations and emotional responses such as fear (Laan et al., 2021).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024), one in three women experience sexual violence. Furthermore, women more frequently engage in sexual activity where consent is given but the act is not truly desired, underscoring gaps in sexual agency and education (Laan et al., 2021).

These disparities are often mistakenly attributed to biological differences between men and women (Laan et al., 2021). However, the differences in sexual experiences are largely shaped by sociocultural factors. The following section examines historical misconceptions about biological differences and the structural factors that limit opportunities for sexual pleasure.

3.2. Biological myths and sociocultural gaps

Historically, women's sexual experiences were often explained through presumed biological differences, suggesting lower responsiveness, weaker desire, or hormonal influences that supposedly reduce their sexual activity (Mahar et al., 2020). However, empirical research increasingly refutes these claims (Laan et al., 2021). Studies show no significant differences between men and women in sexual responsiveness (Laan & Everaerd, 1995) and similar brain responses to sexual stimuli (Mitricheva et al., 2019). Gendered assumptions about sexual desire are also questioned: when desire is measured as a state emerging from arousal rather than as a fixed trait, differences between men and women largely disappear (Dawson & Chivers, 2014). Even traditional trait-based models increasingly challenge the idea that men inherently desire sex more (Murray, 2019). Similarly, hormonal explanations, such as the link between testosterone and libido, appear overstated, with sex hormones playing only a minor role in sexual motivation (Laan et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2014). Taken together, evidence suggests that men and women do not differ significantly in their biological capacity for sexual pleasure.

Instead, sociocultural factors play a central role. According to Laan et al. (2021) women's sexual satisfaction is often limited by structural constraints and prevailing norms, such as the *coital imperative*. The authors describe this as the belief that penis-vaginal intercourse is the most important sexual activity. Combined with the myth that women should achieve orgasm through penetration alone, this reduces the emphasis on alternative forms of pleasure like clitoral stimulation, restricting women's opportunities for satisfaction (Döring & Mohseni, 2022; Mahar et al., 2020). These structural limits also affect sexual desire: women are less likely to seek sexual activity when pleasure is uncertain, creating a cycle of reduced engagement and limited satisfaction (Rubin et al., 2019). These structural limits are part of broader GSS, which shape expectations about who should desire sex and how it should be experienced (Laan et al., 2021). Knowledge emerges as a crucial factor in breaking this cycle, as

women with greater understanding of the clitoris report higher sexual gratification and are less likely to adhere to restrictive GSS (Dienberg et al., 2023). By moving beyond biological myths, it becomes clear that inequalities in sexual pleasure stem not from innate differences but from unequal opportunities shaped by knowledge, norms, and expectations (Laan et al., 2021). The next section will focus on two key mechanisms that are particularly salient: first, deficits in clitoral knowledge, which limit awareness of sexual practices most conducive to female orgasm (Dienberg et al., 2023); and second, the influence of GSS, which position female pleasure as secondary (Ward et al., 2022).

3.2.1. Clitoral knowledge

Clitoral knowledge encompasses understanding the clitoris, its anatomy, and its function in female sexual pleasure, including which sexual practices reliably lead to an orgasm (Dienberg et al., 2023). Research consistently shows that women with greater clitoral knowledge report higher levels of sexual satisfaction and more frequent orgasms (Dienberg et al., 2023; Döring & Mohseni, 2022; Mahar et al., 2020). Interestingly, however, Dienberg et al. (2023) did not find this effect in the context of partnered sex, but only within masturbation. Despite increasing public attention to the importance of clitoral stimulation, overall knowledge remains limited among both women and men (Warshowsky et al., 2020). Dienberg et al. (2023) found that participants correctly answered, on average, only about half of the items on a nine-question quiz assessing clitoral knowledge, with women performing slightly better than men. These persistent gaps are linked to longstanding sociocultural barriers, including inadequate sex education and the historical desexualization of female bodies, which contribute to limited awareness of the clitoris and its role in sexual pleasure (Laan et al., 2021). Dienberg et al. (2023) further demonstrate that the translation of knowledge into sexual outcomes differs between genders. According to them, for women, greater clitoral knowledge not only predicts more frequent orgasms during masturbation but also indirectly enhances sexual pleasure in partnered contexts by reducing reliance on restrictive sexual norms. In men, however, the relationship is less straightforward: a trend was found that clitoral knowledge was negatively linked to sexual pleasure, suggesting that higher clitoral knowledge may be linked to prioritising a partner's orgasm over one's own during partnered sex (Dienberg et al., 2023).

Overall, these findings underscore that knowledge of the clitoris is a crucial factor in supporting sexual satisfaction, yet its effects are shaped by broader sociocultural

conditions (Dienberg et al., 2023). One such condition is the influence of GSS: the norms and expectations that dictate male and female sexual behaviour (Dienberg et al., 2023; Laan et al., 2021; Ward et al., 2022). These scripts can moderate how sexual knowledge translates into actual sexual experiences.

3.2.2. Gendered sexual scripts

GSS are culturally embedded expectations and social norms that guide sexual behaviour and interactions in romantic and sexual relationships (Klein et al., 2019; Rittenhour & Sauder, 2024; Rubin et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2022). They define who is allowed to engage in sexual acts, when, where, and how these acts should take place, and for what reasons (Rittenhour & Sauder, 2024; Klein et al., 2019; Rubin et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2022). In heterosexual relationships, men are typically portrayed as sexually dominant, assertive, and aggressive, with their pleasure often prioritized and emotional attachment de-emphasized (Fournier et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2022). Furthermore, according to Way (2011) young men communicate less emotionally and distance themselves from others, particularly becoming more distrustful of male peers. Men are regarded as “pursuers” and “conquerors,” and masculinity is linked to sexual freedom (Fournier et al., 2022). Women, by contrast, are expected to take a passive and submissive role, with their own sexual desires subordinated to those of male partners (Fournier et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2022). Femininity is frequently associated with sexual restraint and emotional connection (Ward et al., 2022). This imbalance is also reflected in gendered double standards: men are granted greater sexual freedom, while women are socially penalized for similar behaviours (e.g., “slut-shaming”), even as they are expected to remain sexually attractive (Klein et al., 2019; Soster et al., 2024; Ward et al., 2022).

In their review Ward et al. (2022) state that the transmission and maintenance of GSS occurs through family, social networks, and especially media, such as television, films, or music videos. According to them, regular media consumption is associated with stronger endorsement of GSS among adolescents, with an average screen time of over 7 hours. These norms are so deeply ingrained that even individuals who disagree with them often structure their behaviour to be socially accepted (Ward et al., 2022). GSS have significant effects on sexual experiences, particularly for women, limiting sexual agency – that is, the ability to express needs, initiate sex, or refuse it (Dienberg et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2019; Rubin et al., 2019). Such scripts promote the assumption

that verbal consent is unnecessary or “mood-killing,” leading individuals to rely on non-verbal cues or the absence of resistance (Jozkowski et al., 2014; Rittenhour & Sauder, 2024). This increases the risk of sexual coercion, unwanted sexual activity, and even sexual violence, as many women feel unable to assert themselves due to fear of negative reactions or harm (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Ward et al., 2022). Women who strongly internalize GSS often avoid expressing desires or initiating sexual activity to protect their social reputation (Farvid et al., 2017). At the same time, research shows that sexual initiation and open communication are associated with higher sexual satisfaction (Soster et al., 2024). Internalized GSS is also linked to psychological distress, lower self-esteem, and body image issues in women, while among men it correlates with poorer mental health and higher acceptance of violence against women (Ward et al., 2022).

Individuals with limited sexual experience tend to rely more heavily on traditional GSS, whereas negative sexual experiences, such as assault, often lead to deviations from these norms and prompt women to communicate more directly and assertively (Rittenhour & Sauder, 2024). Men generally endorse GSS more strongly than women, and heterosexual individuals adhere to these scripts more than sexual minorities, likely due to the heteronormative foundations of the scripts (Fournier et al., 2022). In queer, non-monogamous, and kink communities, traditional scripts are often rejected, and alternative norms emerge that emphasize open communication and explicit consent, which are associated with more positive and fulfilling sexual experiences (Rittenhour & Sauder, 2024). Finally, higher clitoral knowledge is associated with reduced endorsement of GSS in women, not, however, in men (Dienberg et al., 2023).

Overall, these findings illustrate that sexual pleasure is not solely a matter of biology or individual desire but is deeply shaped by social, cultural, and educational factors (Dienberg et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2019; Rubin et al., 2019). Women’s ability to experience sexual satisfaction is influenced not only by knowledge of their own anatomy and preferences but also by the social scripts that dictate how sexual encounters are structured and evaluated. Similarly, men’s sexual experiences are shaped by expectations to prioritize their own pleasure or their partner’s pleasure in ways that can reinforce inequality (Dienberg et al., 2023; Fournier et al., 2022). These dynamics highlight that sexual pleasure is inherently relational and embedded within broader societal norms, rather than existing in isolation (Ward et al., 2022).

Consequently, improving sexual experiences for all individuals requires more than individual knowledge – it necessitates education that addresses both personal understanding of anatomy, desire, and consent, as well as the social norms and scripts that regulate sexual behaviour (Laan et al., 2021). This underscores the critical role of sexual literacy and comprehensive sex education in promoting not only knowledge and skills but also empowerment, agency, and equitable sexual relationships, which will be discussed in the following section.

4. Sexual literacy

A key aspect of sex education is teaching sexual literacy, which is a comprehensive concept that goes further than merely acquiring information or knowledge (Power et al., 2024). In their introduction to *critical sexual literacy* Herdt and Marzullo (2021, pp. 1-4) state that sexual literacy is about equipping individuals with the skills, resources and insight to navigate sexual health and relationships safely and independently, and to adopt a critical attitude. According to the authors this includes both technical skills such as reading and writing, and intra- and interpersonal communication skills. Key aspects, as defined by Power et al. (2024) include the ability to engage in safe sexual encounters, the communication of knowledge about sexuality and rights, critical reflection on relationships, gender and power dynamics, and the understanding of cultural and social factors shaping personal experiences.

The transfer of sexual literacy should be peer-based and community building. Through acknowledging individuals social and cultural background, it should promote agency. As such sexual literacy emphasizes that knowledge alone is not enough if people lack the ability to act. Online spaces enable exchange with peers and people with similar experiences, which contributes to the validation and understanding of social norms and ethics. The aim is to provide young people with the insight and skills that will help them pursue safe, respectful and pleasurable sexual relationships (Power et al., 2024).

Building on this foundation, this chapter first examines sources emerging adults turn to to engage with sexual topics. Subsequently traditional and modern sex education will be contrasted. Finally, the discussion turns to digital sex education, emphasising its accessibility, anonymity, inclusivity, and ability to address topics often neglected in formal programmes (Gamson & Hertz, 2023; Hensel et al., 2022; Power et al., 2024).

4.1. Sources

An essential part of addressing the issue of sexual literacy among emerging adults is understanding where their knowledge comes from. This section therefore provides an overview of how and where adolescents and emerging adults obtain their information on sexual topics. First, again the study by the BZgA (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022) will be addressed to get an overview of the German-speaking region, which examined the sex education behaviour of young people between the ages of 14 and 25. Furthermore, this information will be supplemented by additional studies (Killoren, 2021; Lyons & Sanders, 2021) that focus on emerging adults.

According to Scharmanski and Hessling (2022), school lessons (69%), personal conversations (68%), and the internet (59%) are the most important sources through which young people between the ages of 14 and 17 deal with sexual topics. About 87% of those surveyed said they had been taught about sexuality at school. The main topics were reproduction and contraception. In personal conversations, peers (65%) and parents (56%) play an important role for 14- to 17-year-olds. The mother (61%) is the most important reference person for girls, followed by their female best friend (51%), while for boys it is the father (39%) and male best friend (41%). However, the influence of parents as a source of sex education is strongly associated with sociocultural background (migration background, religious affiliation, educational attainment) (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). For emerging adults, there is a change in trend (Lyons & Sanders, 2021). According to Killoren (2021), peers are one of the most important sources when dealing with sexual topics. According to the author, this is partly because emerging adults spend more time with their peers (e.g., because they no longer live at home), but also because the conversations are often more pleasant and peers are more open and understanding. Conversations with parents tend to focus on practical and risk-preventive topics such as contraception, menstruation, or STIs (Killoren, 2021). As for gender differences (DeLuca Bishop, 2021, p. 283) further states that female emerging adults discuss a wider variety of sexual topics with their close friends than male emerging adults do.

For data related to internet-based education, Scharmanski and Hessling (2022) jointly studied the group of adolescents (14-17) and young adults (18-25). According to them, the internet, was the third most important source of information. More specifically, search engines (w = 83%; m = 79%), YouTube (w = 14%; m = 22%), and Wikipedia (w

= 16%; m = 19%) were used most frequently. There were significant gender differences. Female respondents obtained most of their information from educational and advice websites (f = 49%; m = 35%) and from forums with experts (f = 37%; m = 39%). Male respondents made greater use of sex films (w = 16%; m = 38%). Sources such as Wikipedia (w = 12%; m = 9%), chats with other users (w = 19%; m = 21%) or influencers (w = 12%; m = 9%) were used by both groups to roughly the same extent (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). The respondents stated that they used the internet primarily for in-depth research (66%) and considered the information found there to be particularly important (65%). Nikkelen et al. (2020) found that while men generally searched for information online more than women, women tended to seek out professional sex education websites more. Males in contrast used more interactive sources such as pornography. Interestingly, Nikkelen et al. (2020) reported that individuals with a higher level of knowledge about sex are more likely to seek out information.

Finally, these primary sources are further supplemented by professional sexual and contraceptive counselling at accredited counselling centres and gynaecological clinics (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022).

4.2. A shift to a more comprehensive sex education

As previously mentioned, traditional sex education has long centred on managing sexual risks (Döring et al., 2022). While intended to protect young people, this fear-based and female-centred approach often led to disengagement – particularly among young men – and overlooked broader aspects of sexuality and relationship dynamics (Claussen, 2019; Sa et al., 2021). In response, modern approaches seek to empower youth by equipping them with knowledge, skills, and values necessary to navigate relationships responsibly and foster well-being (Sa et al., 2021). This chapter therefore examines the shift from risk-focused, fear-based programmes to rights- and empowerment-oriented approaches, highlighting pedagogical methods and practical outcomes that strengthen sexual competence and agency.

Seiler-Ramadas et al. (2021) describe traditional school-based sexuality (TSE) education. According to them, TSE remains narrowly framed and short in duration, with large international variation: Austrian students reportedly receive about ten hours per year, for example, while provision elsewhere ranges from a few hours in total to weekly

sessions over several years. Further the authors state that curricula are predominantly heteronormative, equating heterosexuality with normality and marginalizing non-heterosexual and non-cisgender identities, while neglecting the needs of men, non-binary, and intersex individuals. Thematic diversity is limited, as essential topics such as sexual pleasure, intimacy, relationships, cultural representations of sexuality, pornography, abortion, and emotional dimensions are rarely included (Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021). Another dimension, as stated by the authors, is that these shortcomings are reinforced by structural challenges, including inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and reliance on individual educators' discretion. The taboo surrounding sexual topics further hampers effective delivery, leaving many young people feeling unprepared and turning to online sources for information (Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021).

To address these gaps, scholars argue for a modern shift towards Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) (Döring, 2023; Sa et al., 2021; Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021). CSE is defined as a curriculum-based, holistic approach that integrates cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and legal aspects of sexuality, equipping youth with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for health, dignity, and respectful relationships (Sa et al., 2021; Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021). As Döring (2023) emphasizes, such programs go beyond risk prevention to highlight positive aspects of sexuality, including communication, consent, intimacy, and empowerment, while fostering life skills that challenge unequal power relations and stigma. Effective CSE is designed to begin early, build progressively across schooling, address peer and digital influences, and include discussions of media and pornography. Importantly, it must also be inclusive, embracing sexual and gender diversity, cultural pluralism, and the needs of marginalized groups (Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021).

Programmes such as *WiseGuyz* in Calgary illustrate this paradigm shift (Claussen, 2017). Developed for boys aged 13 to 15, the school-based initiative addresses sexual and reproductive health, relationships, gender, sexuality, media, advocacy, and leadership (Claussen, 2017, 2019). The authors underline that its participatory methods – brainstorming, role plays, discussions, and case studies – are as significant as its content, creating a safe environment where trust can develop and participants' perspectives are included. In this way, the program encourages critical reflection on gender norms and offers space to explore sensitive issues often overlooked in

traditional sex education (Claussen, 2017). Evidence indicates that such rights- and empowerment-oriented approaches yield multiple benefits (Claussen, 2019; Sa et al., 2021; Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021). Participants develop emotional competencies, empathy, and communication skills (Claussen, 2017), while also learning to manage feelings of shame and embarrassment (Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021; Waling et al., 2023). They further contribute to challenging traditional GSS, reducing double standards, and strengthening sexual agency, particularly among young women (Claussen, 2019; Sa et al., 2021).

Overall, this shift underscores that effective sex education must combine knowledge acquisition with participatory methods, critical reflection, and practical skills to foster competence, agency, and well-being in youth. Building on these empowerment-focused approaches, digital formats add complementary spaces that are accessible, anonymous, and inclusive, extending learning to topics such as sexual pleasure, identity, and online practices. As such, they can enhance sexual literacy, self-reflection, and agency in ways that traditional programs alone cannot, a development that will be further discussed in the following chapter.

4.3. Digital sex education

Building on the discussion of digital media as a cultural space for sexual exploration and identity formation in Chapter 2.3., this section turns to its use as a tool for sex education. Here, the focus is not on how digital platforms influence sexual behaviour in general, but on how they can be intentionally employed to promote sexual competence, self-reflection, and sexual agency.

Digital sex education represents a modern extension of CSE, using online platforms to reach young people in flexible and often anonymous ways (Gamson & Hertz, 2023; Power et al., 2024; Zori et al., 2023). It includes formal and informal learning delivered via websites, apps, and social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok (Döring, 2023; Engel, 2023). Its primary goal is to develop sexual competence – the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to support sexual health, rights, and well-being in a socially responsible and consensual way (Claussen, 2019; Power et al., 2024). This encompasses accessing sexual information, entertainment, minority communities, sexual products, and aspects of sex work (Power et al., 2024).

The pedagogical advantages of digital formats lie in their ability to address topics often neglected in formal education – such as sexual pleasure, masturbation, orgasms, sex toys, and sexual and gender identity (Hensel et al., 2022; Zori et al., 2023). They also provide reach to diverse audiences beyond adolescents, including adults, seniors, and marginalized groups such as LGBTQIA+ youth or individuals living under restrictive conditions, offering support, role models, and preparation for offline experiences like coming out (Gamson & Hertz, 2023; Nikkelen et al., 2020).

Importantly, digital sex education fosters active participation and self-directed learning. Many young people adopt a “patchwork approach,” comparing multiple sources to verify information and contextualize experiences (Gamson & Hertz, 2023). Content is produced by a wide range of providers – health organizations, individual educators, and peers – and is delivered through diverse formats including text, video, podcasts, interactive quizzes, and simulations (Döring, 2021; Hensel et al., 2022). Adolescents often integrate these resources into real-life situations (Döring, 2019; Scull et al., 2021). Personal stories shared online can normalize sexuality and support self-confidence (Döring, 2021; Power et al., 2024). However, the same qualities that make digital formats attractive also present risks, including misinformation, cyber-grooming, and non-consensual sexting. Accordingly, Gamson and Hertz (2023, p.) stated that while traditional school-based sex education often was too late and failed to address important elements and areas of information, online sex educational sources were frequently deemed unreliable or inaccurate by emerging adults. This underscores the importance of media literacy and critical engagement (Döring, 2023; Scull et al., 2021).

Researchers call for more inclusive, pleasure-oriented content – particularly regarding clitoral anatomy and function – which can be effectively addressed through interactive and gamified formats (Dienberg et al., 2023; Hensel et al., 2022). By integrating these elements into a rights-based, empowerment-oriented framework, digital sex education can complement traditional programmes and provide young people with the tools to pursue safe, respectful, and pleasurable sexual relationships.

4.4. Conclusion of the theoretical framework

Taken together, the reviewed literature highlights that sexual pleasure is not a purely individual or biological phenomenon but emerges at the intersection of personal knowledge, sociocultural norms, and educational contexts. Limited clitoral knowledge

and restrictive GSS continue to reinforce inequalities in sexual experiences, particularly for women. At the same time, growing attention to sexual literacy and the shift toward sex-positive and inclusive sex education offer promising pathways to foster autonomy, agency, and well-being. Digital platforms further expand these opportunities but also underscore the need for critical and reflective engagement. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates how clitoral knowledge and GSS jointly shape sexual pleasure in emerging adulthood. By focusing on this developmental period, it aims to provide new insights into the mechanisms through which sexual literacy contributes to sexual well-being.

5. Aim of the study and research focus

The preceding theoretical considerations highlight that research on the positive dimensions of sexuality – particularly sexual pleasure – remains comparatively scarce. Yet, sexual pleasure is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of sexual health and well-being. A deeper understanding of how individuals experience and negotiate sexual pleasure, as well as of the structural and cultural factors that shape these experiences, is therefore of central importance.

One of the most persistent challenges in this domain is the existence of *pleasure gaps* – systematic inequalities in the experience of sexual pleasure, particularly between men and women in heterosexual encounters. As outlined in Chapter 3, these disparities are not primarily biological but rooted in sociocultural mechanisms. Central among these are GSS, which prescribe active, pleasure-oriented roles to men while positioning women as passive and relationally focused. Similarly, the *coital imperative* – the assumption that penile-vaginal intercourse is the primary, if not exclusive, form of “real” sex – further privileges male pleasure and neglects the forms of stimulation most conducive to female orgasm. In combination with widespread gaps in knowledge of female anatomy, particularly the clitoris, these dynamics perpetuate significant inequalities in sexual satisfaction. Addressing these disparities requires not only critical engagement with cultural norms but also the promotion of *sexual literacy*. Comprehensive and diverse engagement with sexual topics – whether through formal education or digital and peer-based sources – can foster knowledge, agency, and empowerment, thereby offering a pathway to narrowing existing pleasure gaps.

Against this background, the present study seeks to examine how emerging adults engage with sexual topics, how they perceive their own sexual literacy, and how these processes relate to their experience of sexual pleasure. In doing so, it responds to current societal developments in which young people increasingly navigate sexuality across both offline and online contexts. The following research questions are posed:

RQ1: Which sources do emerging adults use to engage with sexual topics?

RQ2: How do emerging adults evaluate their own knowledge regarding sexual topics (sexual literacy), and how is this related to the frequency of engagement, gender, and different information sources?

RQ3: Is there an association between a diverse and in-depth engagement with sexual topics and the internalization of sexual pleasure?

RQ4: Is a diverse and in-depth engagement with sexual topics associated with GSS?

RQ5: Is a diverse and in-depth engagement with sexual topics associated with clitoral knowledge?

In addition, the study includes one replication hypothesis based on Dienberg et al. (2023). In their study the authors investigated the impact of clitoral knowledge on sexual pleasure and orgasm rate. Doing this, they tested three mediations, seeing how the impact clitoral knowledge on sexual pleasure or orgasm rate is mediated by GSS. However, as the current study focuses on sexual pleasure independent of orgasm rate, only one hypothesis will be replicated.

H1: Internalized GSS mediate the relationship between clitoral knowledge and sexual pleasure.

6. Methods

6.1. Preliminary interview

Before the actual survey, a preliminary interview was conducted with the aim of developing appropriate questions relating to sexuality and sex education among emerging adults. At 10 a.m. on 20.1.2025 five people took part in a focus group setting. The participants were between 21 and 24 years old and were students at the time of the interview. The group consisted of three heterosexual cis men and two heterosexual cis women, who did not know each other. The interview was semi-structured. About

ten questions were prepared. Participants were encouraged to answer freely and to engage with each other. If a topic took up too much time, however, participants were asked to move to the next question. The interview lasted one hour and was recorded with the consent of all participants.

The subjects were asked questions about their approach to exploring and discussing sexual topics, the sources they use for this purpose, and their level of knowledge and uncertainty regarding sexuality. All participants reported a desire for improved education on sexuality, both in school and from their parents. However, there were differences in the nature of their initial encounters with sexuality. The two women generally reported a later initiation into sexual matters, through conversations with friends or at school. The male subjects reported earlier experiences of contact, with a significant proportion of these experiences occurring through to the consumption of pornography. When invited to comment on observed disparities in sexual orientation, the participants as a collective expressed a desire to expand their knowledge of queer sexuality. The male participants in particular expressed a certain degree of uncertainty with respect to this matter. In general, the male participants articulated a sense of unease regarding issues of sexuality and social change during the discourse. The subjects reported feelings of uncertainty regarding their awareness of their partners' needs, citing concerns that their actions might be problematic. Concurrently, however, it was stated that there was minimal space for male individuals to explore their own sexuality, as it is generally more difficult for men to engage in intimate discourse about their feelings and concerns.

The answers from the interview provided useful conclusions for the creation of the questionnaire. In particular, content related to the type of sources (e.g. pornography or podcasts) and a question about the form – whether auditory, visual or written – of the preferred knowledge were integrated ("Bitte ordnen Sie die folgenden drei Formen danach, wie Sie sich am liebsten mit sexuellen Themen auseinandersetzen").

6.2. Study Design and Implementation

The data was collected using an online questionnaire that was implemented with SoSci Survey (Leiner, 2024) and made available to participants via [sosci.univie.ac.at](https://www.sosci.univie.ac.at). The questionnaire was directed at a sample of emerging adults (18-29 years) and covered a wide range of participants, regardless of their current relationship status, level of

education or other demographic characteristics. The objective of the study was to gather comprehensive data on sexual pleasure and its various influencing factors. The distribution of the questionnaire was conducted through a process of snowball sampling. The content was shared among fellow students, various WhatsApp groups, and social media platforms. In addition to academic networks, the link was spread to social contacts such as work colleagues, family members and members of sports clubs and music groups.

The objectives of the study, the requirements for participation and the approximate time required (10–15 minutes) were specified on the first page of the questionnaire. The participants were informed that their responses would be surveyed anonymously, handled strictly confidentially and used exclusively for research purposes. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants could withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. By selecting the "Weiter" option, the participants indicated their consent to the defined conditions of participation (informed consent).

The survey period ran from 14 May 2025 to 8 July 2025. A total of 506 data records were collected from individuals who completed the questionnaire in full. Following the cleansing of the data, which included the exclusion of incomplete data sets, records with $\geq 10\%$ missing answers, and participants under the age of 18 ($n = 0$) and over the age of 29 ($n = 9$), the final number of valid records for further evaluation was 468. Due to the limited number of cases, individuals who identified as gender diverse ($n = 18$) were excluded from the analysis.

The final adjusted dataset used for all descriptive and inferential statistical analyses thus comprised $N = 450$ subjects.

6.3. Subjects

The proportion of female participants was 71.3% ($n = 321$), while the proportion of male participants was 28.7% ($n = 129$). The mean age of the total sample was found to be $M = 23.98$ years ($SD = 2.72$; $\min = 18$; $\max = 29$). No significant age-related differences between males and females were identified ($t(448) = 0.03$, $p = .96$). A chi-square test revealed a significant deviation from an equal gender distribution ($\chi^2(1, N = 450) = 81.92$, $p < .001$). The proportion of female participants was notably higher than that of male participants. With regard to age distribution, more than half of the participants

were in early emerging adulthood (18–24 years, 57.6%, $n = 259$), the remaining participants were in late emerging adulthood (25–29 years, 42.2%, $n = 191$).

Table A 1

Mean differences in age based on gender – independent sample t -test

	Gender	M	SD	$t(448)$	p	d
Age	Female	23.84	2.7	-1.62	.96	2.71
	Male	24.3	2.74			

Note. Only participants with valid age information in the range of 18–29 years were included (final sample, $N = 450$). Two-sided testing. Females ($n = 321$), Males ($n = 129$)

Regarding the highest level of education attained, academic qualifications dominated: 58.2% ($n = 262$) had a university degree; 37.1% ($n = 167$) had passed the Matura or Abitur; 3.1% ($n = 14$) had completed vocational school without passing the Matura or Abitur; 1.1% ($n = 5$) had completed compulsory school years; and 0.4% ($n = 2$) had other qualifications.

Parental education was generally high. Among mothers, 42.1% ($n = 188$) held a university degree, 24.6% ($n = 111$) had completed vocational school without the Matura/Abitur, 22.6% ($n = 101$) had passed the Matura/Abitur, 7.6% ($n = 34$) had completed only compulsory schooling, 1.6% ($n = 7$) had not finished school, and 1.3% ($n = 6$) reported other qualifications. Among fathers, 45% ($n = 201$) held a university degree, 20.8% ($n = 93$) had completed vocational school without the Matura/Abitur, 17.7% ($n = 79$) had passed the Matura/Abitur, 12.3% ($n = 55$) had completed only compulsory schooling, 1.1% ($n = 5$) had not finished school, and 3.1% ($n = 14$) reported other qualifications.

The majority of respondents (72.9%, $n = 328$) were employed. Their employment situations varied: 11.2% ($n = 39$) were in full-time employment, 38.9% ($n = 131$) were in part-time employment, and 27.1% ($n = 127$) were in marginal employment. Other groups included scholarship students, persons on parental leave, the self-employed and the unemployed (see Table A4).

Participants rated their socioeconomic status predominantly mid to high. 41.6% ($n = 186$) rated it rather high; 39.4% ($n = 176$) as average; 11.6% ($n = 52$) as high; 6.5% ($n = 29$) as rather low and 0.9% ($n = 4$) as low.

There was a broad spectrum of religious affiliation and degree of religiosity: 40.4% ($n = 182$) identified themselves as Roman Catholic, 11.8% ($n = 53$) as Protestant and 38.9% ($n = 175$) did not belong to any religion (see Table A5). In addition, subjective religiosity was surveyed. Of the participants, 56.7% ($n = 255$) described themselves as 'not religious', 30.7% as 'hardly religious' ($n = 138$), 11.8% ($n = 53$) as 'religious', and 0.7% ($n = 3$) as 'very religious'. One person did not provide any information on this. The percentages refer to the total sample ($N = 450$).

The majority of participants were in a relationship at the time of the survey (62.7%, $n = 282$). About one third were single (36.6%, $n = 96$). Of those who were in a relationship, the majority were in a committed, monogamous relationship (89.6%, $n = 251$), while 10.4% ($n = 29$) were in a flexible relationship (e.g. open relationship, friends with benefits, situationship), which are characterized by individually negotiated rules and boundaries (Table A6). According to Singh (2025) within *open relationships* romantic or sexual contact with other people is permitted. *Friends with benefits* are defined as relationships, in which a friendship is extended to include sexual components without the commitment of a monogamous partnership (Singh, 2025). *Situationships* fall between friendships and romantic partnerships and are characterized by the absence of explicit agreements or expectations concerning commitment or exclusivity (Singh, 2025).

All participants ($N = 450$) were asked to indicate which type of romantic relationship they would generally prefer. The vast majority cited monogamous relationships as their preferred model (75.1%, $n = 338$). Other frequently mentioned forms were open relationships (6.2%, $n = 28$), friends with benefits (2.9%, $n = 13$) and being single (7.3%, $n = 33$). Other forms such as polyamorous relationships, situational relationships or relationships with more than two people were only mentioned in isolated cases (see Table A7).

In terms of sexual orientation, 68% ($n = 306$) identified as heterosexual, 22.2% ($n = 100$) as bisexual, 5.1% ($n = 23$) as homosexual, 3.8% ($n = 17$) as pansexual or queer, and 0.9% ($n = 4$) as asexual (Table A8).

6.4. Measurements

A comprehensive questionnaire was developed to collect relevant data, including standardized scales and items formulated specifically for this study by the author. The

survey covered demographic data, as well as information on previous engagement with sexual topics and communication about these topics with others, and an assessment of one's own knowledge of sexuality. Additionally, the extent of sexual pleasure, internalization of GSS, and clitoral knowledge were recorded.

Thus, the instruments used covered the central theoretical constructs of the study.

- (1) sociodemographic data;
- (2) information on engagement with sexual topics (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022);
- (3) subjective assessment of one's own sexual pleasure using the Amsterdam Sexual Pleasure Inventory (ASPI 1.0) (Borgmann et al., 2023);
- (4) internalization of GSS according to Rubin et al. (2019);
- (5) internalization of GSS using the Sexual Double Standard scale (SDS) by Amaro et al. (2024); and
- (6) the extent of clitoral knowledge (Dienberg et al., 2023).

The individual areas and instruments used are explained in more detail in the following subchapters. The complete survey questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

6.4.1. Sociodemographic data

A total of 13 items were used to record socio-demographic characteristics. These characteristics were used to describe the sample and statistically control for possible influencing factors in discussions about sexual topics.

The following characteristics were recorded: age (open-ended question in years); gender (female, male, diverse or other); and sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual or other). Relationship status was addressed in three separate items. First, respondents were asked whether they were currently in a romantic relationship. If the answer was 'yes', a filter was activated for the follow-up question, which asked about the current relationship type (e.g. monogamous, open, polyamorous or 'friends with benefits'). In addition, the preferred relationship status was surveyed in the same way among all participants. The highest level of education, current employment status (yes/no) and religious affiliation and personal religiosity were also surveyed. To assess the socio-economic status, a subjective measure of the perceived financial situation of the family of origin compared to the general population

was used. Additionally, the highest educational qualifications of the mother and father were also asked about.

The response formats mainly comprised closed categories with supplementary open response options ('Other: ...') to ensure differentiated and inclusive data collection. A filter mechanism was used to display specific follow-up questions about the type of relationship after an existing relationship had been indicated.

The sociodemographic data primarily serve to describe the sample and to examine potential moderating influences on the sexuality-related variables under investigation.

6.4.2. Engagement with sexual topics

A specially developed part of the questionnaire was used to record individuals' attitudes towards sexual topics. This was designed based on the qualitative preliminary interview, in line with the representative study by the BZgA (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). This part of the questionnaire comprises twelve items covering various dimensions, such as sources of information (e.g. the internet, conversations, specialist literature), the age at which sexuality was first explored, communication about sexual topics within the family and friends, important people for sexual information, information needs, preferred discussion formats, preferred media channels, changes in information habits over time and a subjective assessment of knowledge.

The response formats vary depending on the item. Dichotomous response options (e.g. 'yes'/'no'), multiple responses (e.g. for media use or reference persons), scale formats (e.g. assessment of knowledge: 'low' to 'extensive'), rankings and open-ended response options ('Other') were used. This methodological mix enables both quantitative evaluation and a certain openness in terms of content, which corresponds to the exploratory nature of the study.

The survey allows for a differentiated analysis of information channels, communication contexts and subjective levels of knowledge in the area of sexuality, thereby contributing to the recording of individual sex education and learning processes.

The questions were reviewed within the aforementioned preliminary interview ($n = 5$; ages 21–24; university students) for comprehensibility, relevance and thematic suitability. Feedback was obtained orally during the group discussion and outputs from

this session were used to adjust item wording and ordering as necessary. As this is a heterogeneous set of individual items, no overall score was calculated.

6.4.3. Sexual pleasure (Borgmann et al., 2023)

The validated German version of ASPI 1.0 was used to assess dispositional facets of sexual pleasure (Borgmann et al., 2023). The questionnaire was developed to measure both trait and state aspects of sexual pleasure in various areas (hedonic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal). It is based on the theoretical framework of Werner et al. (2023), which describes sexual pleasure as a positive feeling that arises from the anticipation, attainment, and experience of sexual rewards.

The use of the ASPI 1.0 enabled a differentiated view of sexual pleasure, taking individual differences into account. The questionnaire is gender- and relationship-inclusive and was reviewed in several pilot studies for comprehensibility and content suitability.

In the present study, only trait items (in total 27 questions) were used, as the focus was on long-term tendencies toward sexual pleasure rather than short-term experiences. The trait scales include: *arousal enjoyment*, *bonding enjoyment*, *interaction enjoyment*, *enjoyment-related self-efficacy*, and *enjoyment-related self-worth*. In addition, the general *sexual experience enjoyment* scale was used, which measures pleasure in relation to various forms of sexuality. The reliability of the original scales ranged from acceptable to very good (between $\alpha = .64$ and $\alpha = .86$).

The originally postulated six-dimensional structure could not be fully replicated in the present study (see Figure 3). Instead, a principal component analysis yielded three factors that could be assigned to the areas of *partner-oriented sexual enjoyment*, *self-oriented sexual enjoyment*, and *sexual self-efficacy* (for item loadings see Table A9 in the appendix). Using the extraction sums of squared loadings, the three retained factors explained 62.36% of the total variance (*partner-oriented sexual enjoyment* = 47.49%, *self-oriented sexual enjoyment* = 8.61%, *sexual self-efficacy* = 6.26%; cumulative = 62.36%). For completeness, the rotated solution redistributed the variance across the three factors to 29.39%, 17.52%, and 15.44%, respectively (cumulative 62.36%). The items were grouped according to these factors. Items were retained if their primary loading on the intended factor was at least twice as high as their loading on any other factor. Items that did not meet this criterion were excluded

from the final scales. As a result, 8 items were removed. The final scales thus consisted of 11, 4, and 4 items, respectively. Cronbach's alpha indicated good internal consistency for the refined scales.

The items were answered on a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Higher values indicate a stronger expression of sexual pleasure or corresponding tendencies.

The reliability of the scales ranged from acceptable to very good. The partner-oriented sexual enjoyment scale yielded a reliability of $\alpha = .93$ and item discrimination between .6 and .8. The self-oriented sexual enjoyment scale yielded a reliability of $\alpha = .8$ and item discrimination between .54 and .71. The internal consistency of the sexual self-efficacy scale was relatively low ($\alpha = .70$; item discrimination between .39 and .59) (see Tables A10-A12). The subscales correlated moderately: partner-oriented sexual enjoyment with self-oriented sexual enjoyment, $r = .46$, $p < .001$; partner-oriented sexual enjoyment with sexual self-efficacy, $r = .48$, $p < .001$; and self-oriented sexual enjoyment with sexual self-efficacy, $r = .48$, $p < .001$.

An overall score was not calculated, as such aggregation is not recommended from a psychometric point of view at this stage. Instead, to obtain the composite required for the mediation analysis, a second-order factor model was estimated with the three subscales (*partner-oriented sexual enjoyment*, *self-oriented sexual enjoyment*, *sexual self-efficacy*) as first-order indicators. The subscales were scored as item means with predefined missing-data rules (*partner-oriented*: mean if $\geq 8/10$ items; *self-oriented* and *self-efficacy*: mean if $\geq 3/4$ items). Individual scores on the higher-order factor were obtained using the regression method (i.e., weighted by the model loadings) and used as the overall indicator of sexual pleasure in subsequent analyses. The factor showed acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .69$) and item discrimination between .48 and .52. An overview of item loadings and test statistical parameters can be found in Tables A13-A14 in the appendix.

6.4.4. Gendered sexual scripts

Since part of this work is based on a mediation hypothesis from the study by Dienberg et al. (2023), four items for assessing GSS from Rubin et al. (2019) were used in addition to the Sexual Double Standard scale (SDS) by Amaro et al. (2024).

The items by Rubin et al. (2019) were used in four different national samples (USA, Canada, Germany, Denmark) to investigate whether these scripts influence desire across countries. German items were available from the study in Germany, so no translation was necessary.

Participants answer the four items on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 6 ('strongly agree'). For the evaluation, the items are combined into a 'Gendered Cultural Scripts Scale,' with higher values indicating stronger agreement with gender-related cultural scripts about sexual desire.

The scale showed good to very good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) in all countries studied. In the German sample, reliability was $\alpha = .88$ (Rubin et al., 2019). In the study by Dienberg et al. (2023), where these four items were adapted and used to measure gender-related sexual scripts in the context of sexual pleasure, the items showed acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .67$).

In the present study, a principal components analysis confirmed the one-dimensional structure in which all items loaded on a common factor that explained 68.61% of the total variance (see Table A15 and Figure 4 in the appendix). No rotation was applied because only a single component was extracted. The calculated total scale shows good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) and item discrimination between .55 and .78 (Table A16). Due to the clear factor result, a total score was formed, which is interpreted as a measure of personal agreement with gender-specific norms in the area of sexual behaviour.

The Sexual Double Standard (SDS) developed by Amaro et al. (2024) was used as an additional measure for GSS. The scale was developed to measure personal sexual double standards (SDS), which is a complex, multi-layered construct that functions as an organising principle of heterosexual behaviour. It is an evaluative, gender-related norm for sexual behaviour that grants men more freedom and tends to judge and sanction women who exhibit the same sexual behaviour more negatively.

The questionnaire comprises eight items that were originally intended to represent two subscales: sexual relationships (e.g. multiple partners, casual sex) and sexual acts/activities (e.g. masturbation, sexual initiative). In the present study, Item 8, which referred to masturbation, was not included. This decision was made because, in line with the study conducted by Rubin et al. (2019), the focus was on interpersonal aspects

of GSS. Accordingly, the SDS was primarily used to support these dimensions rather than to capture solitary sexual activities. The items were answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'much more so for women' (1) to 'much more so for men' (5). High scores indicate stronger agreement with a traditional SDS, medium scores indicate an egalitarian sexual standard (SSS), and low scores indicate a reversed SDS. Thus, the SDS is a more up-to-date measurement, not simply considering the endorsement of GSS, but also reviewing opposing beliefs and values. By applying the SDS, the aim was to obtain a more nuanced depiction of GSS and further to review past research methods of GSS.

Items had to be translated into German. The translation was carried out using the double translation method (translation and back-translation), taking into account content equivalence and linguistic comprehensibility (see Table A18). The wording was kept neutral so that the scale can be used in a gender- and relationship-inclusive manner.

In the present study, the originally postulated two-factor structure could not be confirmed (Figure 5). A principal component analysis revealed a one-dimensional structure in which all items loaded onto a common factor, which explained 45.69% of the total variance (see Table A17). Again, no rotation was applied because only a single component was extracted. The calculated total scale shows good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$) and item discrimination between .36 and .65 (Table A19). Based on the clear factor result, an overall score was formed, which is interpreted as a measure of personal agreement with gender-specific norms in the area of sexual behaviour.

Finally, the two measures of GSS were themselves positively correlated ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), indicating that although they stem from different item sets, they reflect overlapping constructs.

6.4.5. *Clitoral knowledge*

The Clitoris Quiz is a measurement tool developed by Dienberg et al. (2023) to assess individuals' knowledge of the clitoris. It was designed to measure common misconceptions about the anatomy of the clitoris and its role in orgasms. It can be used as a valuable tool in clinical and psychoeducational practice to identify knowledge gaps and convey sexual knowledge in a playful way.

The quiz consists of nine questions, with most questions (six) having a 'true,' 'false,' or 'to be honest, I'd have to guess' answer format. Three questions include content-based answer options (e.g., 'oral sex'; 'penile-vaginal intercourse'; 'anal sex') as well as the option 'to be honest, I would have to guess.' One point is awarded for each correct answer, while incorrect answers or the answer 'to be honest, I'd have to guess' receive zero points. Unanswered questions are also scored as 0 points. The points from the quiz questions are combined into a total quiz score, with higher numbers indicating greater clitoral knowledge. Marie-Feline Dienberg provided the German items, and Zoe Rosa Lorenz provided the drawings illustrating vulvas for the present study.

In the study by Dienberg et al. (2023) the internal consistency (e.g. Cronbach's alpha) for the clitoris quiz itself is not explicitly stated in the sources provided. The authors focus on validating the content validity by subject matter experts and item-level performance (percent correct by item and gender).

Dienberg et al. (2023) reported that on average, participants (females: $n = 368$; males: $n = 205$) answered 4.56 out of 9 questions correctly. Female participants answered significantly more questions correctly than male participants ($M = 4.77$; $SD = 1.84$ vs. $M = 4.18$; $SD = 1.77$; $t(571) = 3.76$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.33$). Regarding answer distributions, the authors only provided the percentages of correct answers. The authors found that questions about the precise anatomy and function of the clitoris (e.g. 'The clitoris has a foreskin, glans and shaft' 19.8% of females vs. 23.9% of males, and "The clitoris is involved in every orgasm": 27.2% vs 16.6%). These questions had the lowest correct response rates. The highest level of knowledge was found in questions related to specific sexual practices, such as "The clitoris erects when it receives increased blood flow (e.g. during sexual arousal)": 85.1% vs. 83.9% answered correctly, and "Where can you find the clitoral glans? (Choose the appropriate letter)": 83.7% vs. 79.0%). Item development included expert evaluation for relevance, clarity, brevity, and uniqueness to support content validity (Dienberg et al., 2023).

7. Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis of the data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (29.0.0.0 (241)). First, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages) were calculated to describe the sample and the central variables. A table

with the abbreviations of central statistical parameters and variables can be found in the appendix (list of abbreviations).

The following inferential statistical methods were used to test the research questions and hypotheses:

- Descriptive analyzes (mean values, standard deviations, minimum, maximum, frequencies) to describe the variables,
- t-tests for independent samples,
- χ^2 tests to analyze correlations between categorical variables,
- exploratory factor analyzes (principal component analysis with Varimax rotation),
- Pearson and Spearman correlations,
- multiple regression analyses (including testing for multicollinearity),
- and mediation analyses with bootstrapping.

A significance level of 5% probability of error was set for all tests. Effect sizes were interpreted according to Cohen (1988) (η^2 : .01 = small, .06 = medium, .14 = large). The statistical requirements of the procedures used were checked.

Missing values were excluded listwise. Minor fluctuations in the number of cases result from the case-related evaluation per analysis.

8. Results

The results section is divided into two parts. The first part covers the results of the exploratory research. The first two subchapters examine how emerging adults deal with sexual topics and how they assess this knowledge themselves. The subsequent subchapters examine how dealing with sexual topics affects the main variables (sexual pleasure, GSS, clitoral knowledge). The second part describes the results of the mediation analyses.

8.1. Exploratory research

First, the analyses provide an overview of participants' engagement with sexual topics. Subsequently, the focus turns to their subjective assessment of sexual literacy. Finally, the relationships between engagement and the key outcome variables of sexual pleasure, GSS, and clitoral knowledge are examined.

8.1.1. *Engagement with sexual topics*

Several descriptive items were analysed to answer the first research questions. On average, participants engaged with 7.12 sources. There was a significant gender difference. The group of women ($M = 7.32$) showed a significantly greater variety of source groups used than the group of men ($M = 6.61$), $t(445) = 3.04$, $p = .002$, difference = 0.72 (Table A20). A more detailed analysis showed that the respondents most frequently engage with sexual topics through informal, low-threshold and everyday channels. Communication with other people ranks first (93.7%), closely followed by the internet (93.5%) and personal experience (91.3%). School lessons are also a relevant source for the majority of respondents (73.8%). In the middle range of frequency of use are movies (49.4%), fiction or entertainment literature (49.2%), pornography (47.4%) and magazines (42.3%). Only 30% of respondents said they had obtained information from lectures, 31.1% from documentaries and only 26% from free educational brochures. Computer programmes or games (6.5%) and the category 'Other' (4%) were mentioned least frequently (see Table A21).

Overall, both similarities and clear gender differences emerged in the use of various sources of information. Communication with others, the Internet, and own experiences were cited by almost all respondents regardless of gender, and no significant differences were observed for traditional sources such as lectures, school lessons, specialist literature, movies, documentaries, or other experiences. However, several sources revealed statistically significant gender differences. Women reported using fiction/entertainment literature (57.1% vs. 35.2%; $\chi^2 = 17.52$, $p < .001$), magazines (48.9% vs. 25.8%; $\chi^2 = 20.01$, $p < .001$), free brochures (30.1% vs. 15.6%; $\chi^2 = 9.95$, $p = .002$), and podcasts (41.5% vs. 22.7%; $\chi^2 = 14.06$, $p < .001$) significantly more often than men. Conversely, men relied more strongly on pornography (70.3% vs. 38.4%; $\chi^2 = 37.35$, $p < .001$) and computer programs/games (12.5% vs. 3.1%; $\chi^2 = 14.55$, $p < .001$) (Table A21). On average, participants were 13.26 years old when they first dealt with sexual topics. Here, too, there was a significant gender difference ($t(441) = 2.79$, $p = .006$). Women ($M = 13.47$ years) reported a significantly higher average age of first exposure than men ($M = 12.72$ years) (see Table A22).

Participants were asked to what extent they talk about sexuality within their family or circle of friends (see Table A23). The evaluation of the recorded scale (0 = no to 3 = yes) yielded a mean value of $M = 1.91$ ($SD = 1.01$; $n = 425$) for communication within

the family circle. For communication among friends, the mean was $M = 2.05$ ($SD = 0.94$; $n = 445$). In both variables, the values ranged across the entire response spectrum from 0 to 3. A comparison by gender showed no significant difference in communication within the family circle ($t(423) = 1.19$, $p = .234$). The difference was also not significant among friends but could be described as a trend in the two-tailed test ($t(445) = 1.81$, $p = .071$). Women had slightly higher mean values than men in both areas.

Furthermore, participants were able to name several people as important sources of information on sexual topics (Table A24). The most frequently mentioned were best friends (83.2%) and partners (73.2%). Other peers also played an important role and were mentioned by 35.1% of respondents. Doctors were named as a relevant source by around a quarter of participants (26.4%). Respondents were significantly less likely to name their mother (11.6%), sister (8.7%) or brother (2.0%) as a reference person. The importance of fathers and teachers was even lower, with only 1.3% of participants naming them. Other persons like psychotherapists, activists on social media or 'nobody' were mentioned sporadically (2.5%).

For most sources, such as parents in general, teachers, peers, or other persons, no significant gender differences emerged. However, several sources revealed noteworthy patterns. Women tended to report mothers (13.5% vs. 7.0%; $\chi^2 = 3.70$, $p = .055$) and medical professionals (28.8% vs. 20.3%; $\chi^2 = 3.42$, $p = .064$) more often than men, although these differences were only marginal. In contrast, men reported brothers significantly more often than women (5.5% vs. 0.6%; $\chi^2 = 10.85$, $p < .001$). Women, on the other hand, named best friends more frequently than men (86.5% vs. 75.0%; $\chi^2 = 8.68$, $p = .003$) (see Table A24).

When asked about their preferred media for further information on sexual topics, most participants selected the internet (64.2%), followed by social media (51.7%). Specialist literature (e.g. scientific texts) was also selected as the preferred source by 45.6% of respondents. In addition, entertainment literature (33.1%), films (28.2%) and public lectures (27.5%) were each preferred by about a quarter of the participants. Free educational brochures (26.4%) and exhibitions (26.2%) were also mentioned with similar frequency. Magazines played a lesser role, at 22.4%. Only a small proportion of respondents (11.4%) stated that they did not want to receive any further information on sexual topics.

Regarding further sources of information, several significant gender differences emerged. Women were more likely than men to report specialist literature (48.6% vs. 38.3%; $\chi^2 = 3.91$, $p = .048$), entertainment literature (37.0% vs. 23.4%; $\chi^2 = 7.58$, $p = .006$), social media (57.4% vs. 37.5%; $\chi^2 = 14.44$, $p < .001$), and exhibitions (29.5% vs. 18.0%; $\chi^2 = 6.25$, $p = .012$). In addition, women tended to mention free brochures (28.8% vs. 20.3%; $\chi^2 = 3.42$, $p = .064$) and films (30.4% vs. 22.7%; $\chi^2 = 2.71$, $p = .100$) more frequently, although these differences were not significant regarding 5% probability of error. For newspapers, public lectures, and the Internet, no gender differences were observed (see Table A25).

When it came to the use of digital information sources on sexual topics, search engines (e.g. Google, Chrome) were by far the most frequently mentioned: 96.5% of participants stated that they used these platforms to search for information. Wikipedia was only used by 20.2%, 16.4% said they used other platforms such as ChatGPT, Youtube Videos or Podcasts episodes, social media (tiktok or instagram), forums (e.g. reddit) or websites targeting female pleasure (e.g. ErikaLust, Female Company, Femtasy) (Tables A26-A27).

When asked about the use of social media platforms for information on sexual topics, Instagram (71.0%) and YouTube (55.8%) were the most frequently mentioned sources. About one quarter of the participants reported TikTok (27.7%), while podcasts (8.2%), X (formerly Twitter; 2.6%), and Facebook (0.9%) played only a minor role. With regard to gender differences, women were significantly more likely than men to report using TikTok (32.2% vs. 10.4%; $\chi^2 = 9.04$, $p = .003$). In addition, there was a slight but insignificant trend for women to cite X more often (6.3% vs. 1.6%; $\chi^2 = 3.20$, $p = .074$). For YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and podcasts, no significant gender differences were observed (see Table A28).

In terms of the preferred form of engagement with sexual topics, the written form was most frequently cited as the first choice (see Table A29). 42.7% of participants gave it the highest priority, followed by visual form (e.g. videos), which ranked first for 33.6%. Auditory form (e.g. podcasts) was chosen as the preferred form of information by only 23.3% of respondents. A clear pattern also emerges when looking at the other rankings: the auditory form was most frequently ranked third (41.4%), while the visual form tended to be ranked second more often (35.3%).

8.1.2. Subjective assessment of sexual literacy

Participants were asked to rate their own knowledge of sexual topics on a scale from 1 ('low') to 5 ('extensive') (see Table A30). A total of 43.8% of respondents rated their knowledge as 'rather extensive' (value 4), followed by 35.8% who rated it as 'average' (value 3). 15.2% rated their knowledge as 'extensive' (value 5). Only 4.7% rated their knowledge as 'rather low' (value 2), and only 0.4% stated 'low' (value 1).

There was no significant correlation between age and self-assessment of knowledge on sexual topics ($d = -0.06$, $p = .18$). Further, no significant gender differences were found between men and women ($d = .16$, $p = .12$).

A significant positive correlation was found between participants' self-assessment of their sexual knowledge and the number of different information sources used ($r = .13$, $p < .01$). This indicates that individuals who evaluated their knowledge as higher also tended to draw on a greater variety of information sources. However, the effect size was small, suggesting that while the association is reliable, the number of different information sources explains only a limited part of the variance in self-assessed knowledge (Table A31).

There were no significant correlations between self-assessment of knowledge on sexual topics and the ranking of preferred learning formats (auditory, visual, literature) (all $p > .05$) (Table A32). Self-assessment of knowledge about sexual topics correlated significantly positive with both communication with family members ($r = .13$, $p < .01$) and communication with friends ($r = .22$, $p < .01$). Higher knowledge assessments were associated with more conversations in both social contexts (Table A33).

A total of 27.7% ($n = 124$) of participants reported that there were other topics on which they would like to receive further information (see table A34). Participants were particularly interested in more detailed information on health issues such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception and the effects of diseases or medications on sexuality. Other areas of interest included sexual practices and techniques, communication and intimacy in relationships, sexual orientation and queer sex, as well as psychological, social and cultural issues (see Table A35). Gender was not associated with the wish to receive further information, $\chi^2(1, N = 445) = 0.024$, $p = .876$, $\phi = .007$. Age was likewise unrelated ($r = .014$, $p = .776$, indicating a negligible effect). A chi-square test showed that the desire to receive further information varied by self-

assessed knowledge, $\chi^2(4, N = 445) = 11.40, p = .022$, with the proportion answering “yes” decreasing as knowledge increased (from 50.0% at level 1 to 19.1% at level 5). This desire was further examined in relation to the number of information sources used. The overall association across usage levels was not significant, $\chi^2(13, N = 445) = 16.61, p = .218$. However, a linear-by-linear trend was detected, $\chi^2(1) = 5.08, p = .024$, indicating a small positive relationship: participants who used more sources were somewhat more likely to express the desire to receive further information (see Tables A36-A37).

8.1.3. Relationship between a diverse engagement and the main variables

The correlations between engagement with sexual topics and the main outcome variables were examined using different indicators of engagement, including the total number of sources used, the depth of communication with family and friends, and the self-assessment of knowledge (see Table A2).

Engagement with sexual topics – indexed by the number of sources used, depth of communication (family, friends), and self-assessed knowledge – was positively related to sexual pleasure overall: number of sources ($p = .16, p < .001$), family communication ($p = .11, p = .022$), friends communication ($p = .25, p < .001$), and knowledge self-assessment ($p = .31, p < .001$). At the subscale level, significant associations were observed for partner-oriented enjoyment with sources ($p = .12, p < .01$), friends ($p = .15, p < .01$), and knowledge self-assessment ($p = .22, p < .01$); for self-oriented enjoyment with sources ($p = .20, p < .01$), family ($p = .11, p < .05$), friends ($p = .22, p < .01$), and knowledge self-assessment ($p = .23, p < .01$); and for sexual self-efficacy with family ($p = .10, p < .05$), friends ($p = .21, p < .01$), and knowledge self-assessment ($p = .28, p < .01$).

For GSS measured according to Rubin et al. (2019), no significant associations were found with the number of sources, communication with family, or communication with friends. However, participants’ self-assessment of their knowledge showed a significant negative correlation with GSS ($p = -.18, p < .001$), indicating that higher perceived knowledge was linked to weaker endorsement of traditional GSS.

For GSS measured according to Amaro et al. (2024), no significant correlations emerged. Neither communication with family, communication with friends, nor self-assessment of knowledge showed associations with GSS.

The number of information sources showed a significant positive correlation with clitoral knowledge ($\rho = .16$, $p < .001$), indicating that participants who drew on more sources demonstrated higher knowledge scores. Communication with friends was also significantly associated with clitoral knowledge ($\rho = .11$, $p = .016$), whereas communication with family was not related ($\rho = .03$, $p = .572$). Finally, participants' self-assessment of their own knowledge showed the strongest positive correlation, albeit with a modest effect size ($\rho = .29$, $p < .001$), suggesting that subjective perceptions of knowledge aligned with objectively measured clitoral knowledge.

Table A 2

Correlations between sexual pleasure, GSS, SDS, clitoral knowledge, and indicators of sexual information

	Number of sources	Family communication	Friends communication	Knowledge assessment
Sexual pleasure (second-order)	.16**	.11*	.25**	.31**
Partner-oriented sexual enjoyment	.12**	.06	.15**	.22**
Self-oriented sexual enjoyment	.20**	.11*	.22**	.23**
Sexual self- efficacy	.08	.10*	.21**	.28**
GSS (Rubin)	-.09	.04	-.09	-.18**
SDS (Amaro)	.04	.00	-.09	-.09
Clitoral knowledge	.16**	.03	.11*	.29**

Note. Spearman's ρ shown. $N = 447$ (family communication: $n = 425$). Significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

8.2. Replicative hypothesis

In the following section the results of the mediation analysis will be reported. As mentioned above, the ASPI 1.0 (Borgmann et al., 2023) was used to measure sexual

pleasure. Following the instrument authors' guidance, the three subscales (partner-oriented sexual enjoyment, self-oriented sexual enjoyment, sexual self-efficacy) were analyzed separately as predictors. In parallel, an overarching composite was derived from a second-order factor model using regression scoring (i.e., a weighted factor score; see Section 6.4.3 for details). Mediation results based on this composite closely matched those from the individual subscales; therefore, the subscale results are reported below.

Further, as this mediation model was tested as a replicative hypothesis based on Dienberg et al. (2023), the present study aimed to use the same or comparable measures. In order to assess GSS the authors used four items by Rubin et al. (2019). Thus, first the mediation analysis was conducted implementing said items. As mentioned above, to broaden the perspective, a second model was applied to measure GSS using the SDS by Amaro et al. (2024). While the Rubin et al. (2019) items provide a linear measure of GSS, the SDS captures a more differentiated attitudinal spectrum, distinguishing between reversed standards, egalitarian views, and endorsement of traditional double standards. This extended operationalization allows for a more comprehensive picture of gendered norms in sexuality.

8.2.1. Descriptive statistic of the main variables

Descriptive statistics for the main study variables are presented in Table A38. On average, participants scored 5.21 (SD = 0.81) on partner-oriented sexual enjoyment and 4.81 (SD = 0.93) on self-oriented sexual enjoyment. The mean score for sexual self-efficacy was 3.84 (SD = 0.93). The second-order factor score representing the overall construct of sexual pleasure, derived from factor analysis, was standardized with a mean of 0 (SD = 1.00).

With regard to gender differences (see Table A39), independent-samples t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences between men and women on the overall sexual pleasure factor, $t(445) = -1.23$, $p = .22$, $d = -.13$, or on the subdimensions partner-oriented sexual enjoyment, $t(445) = -1.42$, $p = .16$, $d = -0.13$, self-oriented sexual enjoyment, $t(445) = -1.22$, $p = .22$, $d = -0.12$, and sexual self-efficacy, $t(445) = -0.14$, $p = .89$, $d = -0.01$.

For GSS, participants scored on average 3.03 (SD = 0.44) on the items based on Rubin et al. (2019) and 2.97 (SD = 1.18) on the SDS-items based on Amaro et al. (2024). So

far, no significant gender differences were observed: women ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.22$) and men ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 1.13$) did not differ significantly on the Rubin-based items, $t(445) = 0.98$, $p = .33$, $d = 0.10$, and no difference emerged on the SDS-items either (women: $M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.48$; men: $M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.3$), $t(445) = -0.96$, $p = .34$, $d = -.1$.

For clitoral knowledge, participants scored on average 5.15 ($SD = 1.88$) on the clitoral quiz (range: 0–9). A significant gender difference emerged, with women ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.82$) scoring higher than men ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.89$), $t(445) = 4.53$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.44$.

To examine potential age effects (Table A40), participants were divided into early (18–24 years) and late (25–29 years) emerging adults. Independent-samples t -tests revealed no significant differences between the two groups in sexual pleasure ($t(445) = -0.55$, $p = .59$), GSS as measured by Rubin et al. (2019) ($t(445) = 0.95$, $p = .34$), GSS as measured by Amaro et al. (2024) ($t(445) = 0.14$, $p = .89$), or clitoral knowledge ($t(445) = -0.33$, $p = .74$). Similarly, no significant differences emerged between younger and older participants. The overall sexual pleasure factor did not vary significantly across age groups, $t(445) = 0.14$, $p = .89$, $d = .01$. The same was true for partner-oriented sexual enjoyment, $t(445) = -0.58$, $p = .56$, $d = -0.06$, self-oriented sexual enjoyment, $t(445) = 0.11$, $p = .91$, $d = .01$, and sexual self-efficacy, $t(445) = -0.84$, $p = .40$, $d = -0.08$.

8.2.2. *Pearson correlations between variables*

For initial orientation, Pearson correlations between the central variables were calculated (see Table A41).

Table A 3

Correlations between sexual pleasure, clitoral knowledge, and gendered sexual scripts (GSS)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Sexual pleasure	—	.24***	-.28***	-.11*
2. Clitoral knowledge		—	-.21***	-.20***
3. GSS (Rubin et al., 2019)			—	.25***
4. GSS (Amaro et al., 2024)				—

Note. $N = 447$. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

Sexual pleasure showed a consistent pattern of associations with the other constructs. Specifically, it was positively associated with clitoral knowledge ($r = .24$, $p < .001$), indicating that greater knowledge of the clitoris was related to higher levels of sexual pleasure. At the same time, sexual pleasure was negatively related to both measures of GSS. GSS as assessed with the items based on Rubin et al. (2019), were associated with lower levels of sexual pleasure ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$). A similar, albeit numerically weaker, negative association was also found when GSS were measured with the items based on Amaro et al. (2024) ($r = -.11$, $p = .026$).

Clitoral knowledge further correlated negatively with both measures of GSS, suggesting that greater endorsement of GSS was linked to lower levels of knowledge about the clitoris (Rubin et al., 2019: $r = -.21$, $p < .001$; Amaro et al., 2024: $r = -.20$, $p < .001$).

8.2.3. Prerequisite tests

Prior to conducting the mediation analysis, the basic assumptions of linear regression models were examined. Linearity between the predictor, mediator(s), and outcome variable was visually assessed using a scatterplot matrix and deemed to be met. Multicollinearity diagnostics indicated no critical issues (highest condition index = 20.64; no multiple high variance proportions within the same dimension), suggesting that regression coefficients could be estimated independently. The histogram of standardized residuals showed an approximately normal distribution ($M \approx 0$, $SD \approx 1$), and this was further supported by inspection of the Q-Q plot. Visual inspection of the scatterplot of standardized residuals against predicted values revealed no systematic

patterns, indicating that the assumption of homoscedasticity was satisfied. No extreme outliers ($|z| > 3$) were detected. Overall, all key model assumptions were considered adequately met.

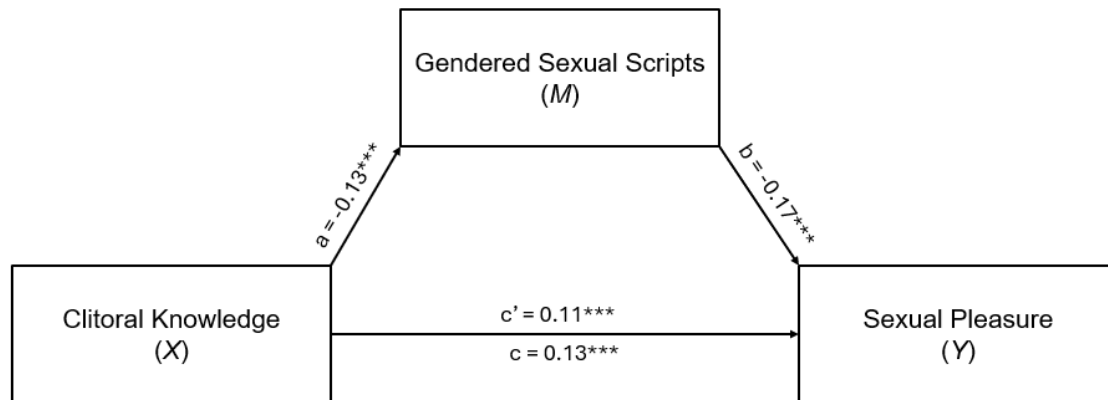
8.2.4. Mediation applying sexual pleasure a second order factor

The mediation analysis, using the items by Rubin et al. (2019) revealed that higher levels of clitoral knowledge were significantly associated with lower endorsement of GSS ($b = -0.13$, $p < .001$). Greater endorsement of GSS, in turn, was negatively related to sexual pleasure ($b = -0.17$, $p < .001$). Even after controlling for the mediator, a direct positive effect of clitoral knowledge on sexual pleasure remained ($b = 0.11$, $p < .001$). Additionally, a small but significant indirect effect through the mediator was observed ($b = 0.02$, 95% CI [0.010, 0.036]), indicating that part of the positive association between clitoral knowledge and sexual pleasure can be explained by lower endorsement of GSS (see Figure 1).

Gender differences emerged. For men, clitoral knowledge was positively associated with sexual pleasure, with a significant direct effect ($b = .13$, $p = .003$). However, no indirect effect via GSS was observed, as neither the path from clitoral knowledge to GSS nor from GSS to sexual pleasure reached significance. In contrast, among women, a similar pattern of results emerged with an even clearer direct effect of clitoral knowledge on sexual pleasure ($b = .11$, $p < .001$). Here, however, clitoral knowledge was significantly negatively related to GSS ($b = -.18$, $p < .001$), and GSS in turn significantly predicted lower sexual pleasure ($b = -.21$, $p < .001$). This resulted in a significant indirect effect, indicating that for women, the relationship between clitoral knowledge and sexual pleasure was partly mediated by a weaker endorsement of GSS (see Figures 6-7).

Figure 1

Mediation model of the total sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), sexual pleasure



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

8.2.5. Mediation applying sexual pleasure with three scales

In the first mediation analysis, clitoral knowledge was entered as the predictor, GSS as measured by Rubin et al. (2019) as the mediator, and *partner-oriented sexual enjoyment* as the dependent variable (Figure 8). The results indicated a significant negative association between clitoral knowledge and GSS ($b = -0.13$, $p < .001$), a pattern that was consistent across all three subscales. Both clitoral knowledge ($b = 0.06$, $p = .007$) and GSS ($b = -0.08$, $p = .016$) significantly predicted partnered-oriented sexual enjoyment. The total effect of clitoral knowledge on partnered-oriented sexual enjoyment was significant ($b = 0.07$, $p = .001$). In addition to the direct effect ($b = 0.06$, $p = .007$), there was also a small but significant indirect effect via GSS ($b = 0.01$, 95% CI [0.002, 0.020]).

A similar picture emerged for the *self-oriented sexual enjoyment scale* (Figure 11): Both clitoral knowledge ($b = 0.10$, $p < .001$) and GSS ($b = -0.13$, $p < .001$) showed significant correlations with self-oriented sexual enjoyment. The total effect of clitoral knowledge on the scale was significant ($b = 0.11$, $p < .001$), as was the direct effect ($b = 0.10$, $p < .001$). In addition, there was a significant indirect effect via GSS ($b = 0.02$, 95% CI [0.006, 0.030]).

This pattern was also confirmed for *sexual self-efficacy* (Figure 14): Clitoral knowledge ($b = 0.08$, $p < .001$) and GSS ($b = -0.15$, $p < .001$) both predicted the outcome, with a significant total effect ($b = 0.10$, $p < .001$). Here, too, the direct effect remained

significant ($b = 0.08$, $p < .001$), and there was a significant indirect effect via GSS ($b = 0.02$, 95% CI [0.008, 0.032]).

When examining mediation models with GSS (Rubin et al., 2019) as mediator, clear differences between males and females emerged. Among women, clitoral knowledge was negatively associated with GSS ($b = -0.17$, $p < .001$), and significant indirect effects via GSS were found for both *sexual self-efficacy* ($b = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.015, 0.054]) and *self-oriented sexual enjoyment* ($b = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.016, 0.055]) (see Figures 12&15). In both cases, the direct effects of clitoral knowledge remained significant ($b = 0.07$, $p = .016$; $b = 0.09$, $p = .002$). For *partner-oriented sexual enjoyment*, only a direct effect emerged ($b = 0.07$, $p = .008$), while the indirect effect was not significant (Figure 9). In contrast, among men, clitoral knowledge was not significantly related to GSS ($b = -0.06$, $p = .27$), and no indirect effects were observed. Instead, clitoral knowledge directly predicted *sexual self-efficacy* ($b = 0.11$, $p = .014$) and *self-oriented sexual enjoyment* ($b = 0.13$, $p = .002$), whereas *partner-oriented sexual enjoyment* showed no significant associations (direct effect: $b = 0.05$, $p = .13$) (see Figures 10, 13, 16).

In sum, using all three scales of sexual pleasure (Borgmann et al., 2023) across the full sample, clitoral knowledge was consistently linked to greater sexual self-efficacy and sexual enjoyment, with small but significant indirect effects via lower endorsement of GSS. Gender-stratified analyses revealed that these mediation effects were driven almost entirely by women: among them, higher knowledge predicted reduced GSS and thereby greater *self-efficacy* and *self-oriented sexual enjoyment*, while men showed only direct effects of knowledge on outcomes without mediation through GSS.

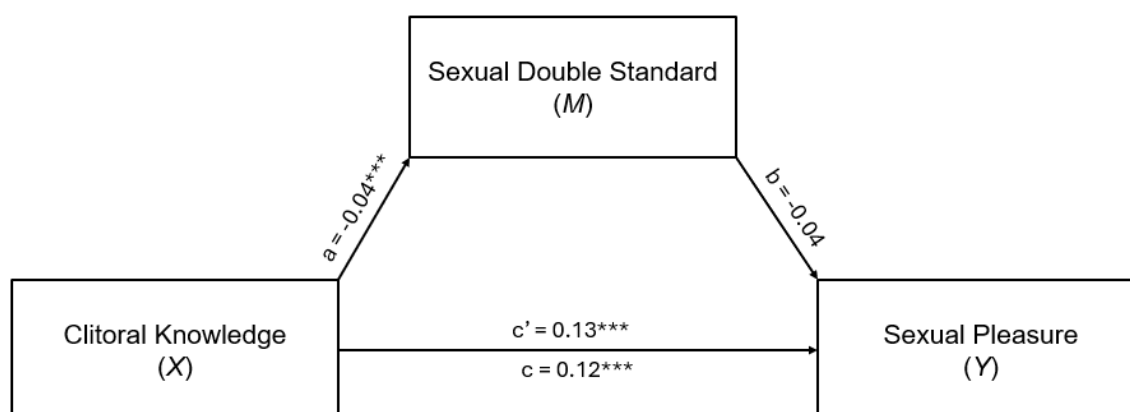
8.2.6. Mediation based on items by Amaro et al. (2024)

The mediation analysis conducted using the SDS by Amaro et al. (2024) showed that a higher value in clitoral knowledge was significantly associated with a lower value in the endorsement of GSS ($b = -0.04$, $p < .001$). However, the mediator GSS was not significantly associated with sexual pleasure ($b = -0.04$, $p = .69$). At the same time, as with the mediation based on Rubin et al. (2019) there was a direct positive effect of clitoral knowledge on sexual pleasure ($b = 0.13$, $p < .001$), which remained even after controlling for the mediator. The indirect effect via GSS proved to be insignificant ($b = 0.002$, 95% CI [-0.08, 0.02]) (see Figure 2).

When using the SDS measure of GSS as mediator, different patterns emerged for males and females (see Figures 17-18). Among men, clitoral knowledge was negatively associated with GSS ($b = -.03$, $p = .04$), yet sexual scripts did not significantly predict sexual pleasure ($b = -.08$, $p = .77$). Accordingly, the indirect effect of clitoral knowledge on sexual pleasure through sexual scripts was not significant, while the direct effect remained robust ($b = .132$, $p = .003$). For women, a similar negative association between clitoral knowledge and GSS was observed ($b = -.04$, $p = .007$). However, as in the male subsample, GSS did not predict sexual pleasure ($b = -.04$, $p = .730$), and the indirect effect was again nonsignificant. The direct effect of clitoral knowledge on sexual pleasure was even numerically stronger among women ($b = .15$, $p < .001$).

Figure 2

Mediation model of the total sample: clitoral knowledge, sexual double standard (based on Amaro et al. (2019)), sexual pleasure



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

9. Discussion

The present study offers insights into how emerging adults approach sexual topics. It evaluates their knowledge and the relationship between this engagement and key aspects such as sexual pleasure, GSS and clitoral knowledge. As with the results section, the discussion is divided into two parts. First, the results of the exploratory questions are discussed. Secondly, the results of the mediations are analysed.

9.1. Exploratory research

In the following section, the results of the exploratory research, assessing emerging adults' engagement with sexual topics will be contextualized in relation to the

presented literature (see Chapters 1-4). The first two answers to the questions concerning emerging adults' engagement with sexual topics and their subjective assessment of their sexual knowledge are summarized in the first chapter. Questions regarding the link between engagement with sexual topics and the main variables are summarized in the second chapter.

9.1.1. Engagement with sexual topics

Participants reported using an average of seven different sources of sexual information, with women drawing on a significantly broader range than men. Informal channels such as conversations with others, the internet, and personal experiences were most common, while formal sources like school or brochures played a lesser role. Clear gender differences emerged: women more often used literature, magazines, podcasts, and social media, whereas men relied more on pornography, games, and brothers as sources. Friends and partners were named as the most important reference persons, and written formats were generally preferred over visual or auditory ones.

This wide range of sources underscores the diversity of sexual socialization in emerging adulthood as stated by several authors (Gamson & Hertz, 2023; Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). Rather than being shaped by a single, dominant authority, sexuality emerges from a complex interplay of formal (e.g. school), informal (e.g. conversations with peers) and media (e.g. the internet and social media) sources. This complexity is further reflected in the concept of sexual literacy, as described by Power et al. (2024). According to them, sexual literacy encompasses not only cognitive knowledge, but also communicative practices and critical reflection processes. Notably, gender differences emerged: female participants reported utilising a significantly more diverse range of sources in comparison to male participants. However, the overall difference in absolute terms was found to be relatively small. This finding aligns with the observations of DeLuca Bishop (2021), who reported that female emerging adults discuss a wider range of topics with their friends.

It is noteworthy that the most frequently used sources are associated with everyday, low-threshold forms of interaction, such as conversations with friends and partners, internet usage, and personal experiences. It is evident that more formalized sources, such as school lessons, were also relevant to a majority, but their importance was

markedly lower. In contrast, institutional or structured educational materials (e.g., lectures, documentaries, brochures) were used only by a minority, while highly mediated or entertainment-related sources (e.g., films, novels, pornography, magazines) occupied a middle range. Thus, the study confirms earlier findings (Döring, 2019; Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022) that highlight the central role of peer groups and digital media. Furthermore, these results support the need for participatory methods in sex education (Claussen, 2017, 2019). Participants engage with these sources contributing their own interests and concerns. As asserted by Döring (2021) and Power et al. (2024), this personalized approach has the potential to normalize sexual subjects and as such support confidence and sexual agency.

Conversely, parents and teachers played a subordinate role. Only a small proportion of respondents cited mothers, fathers or teachers as important sources of information. This pattern corresponds to earlier findings (Killoren, 2021; Lyons & Sanders, 2021), which stated that parents' influence decreases as individuals transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood. This reluctance may be attributed to the still traditional sex education that participants received during their school years (Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021). As reported by numerous scholars, both adolescents and emerging adults are interested in a diverse field of sexual topics (Gamson & Hertz, 2023; Zori et al., 2023). However, traditional sex education in schools is often inadequate in scope, addressing only a limited number of subjects (Gamson & Hertz, 2023; Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021). Consequently, subjects of interest are not being addressed (Gamson & Hertz, 2023; Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021). These findings are further supported by the results of the preliminary interview, in which participants stated that they felt the information provided by both school and parents was insufficient.

A particularly intriguing finding emerged from a detailed examination of communication concerning sexuality within the contexts of friends and family. The analysis revealed that both environments were relevant contexts for sexual communication, although the mean values indicated that friends were marginally more central than family members. Gender differences were small and did not reach significance. However, a tendency was noted among female participants to report higher levels of communication in both contexts. This supports findings by Way (2011) who noted that young men who have internalized gender norms find it difficult to express their emotions and generally distance themselves from others. In addition, as previously stated, traditional sex

education is mostly risk focused and primarily directed towards girls and women (Claussen, 2017). This presents a conundrum. On the one hand, through the endorsement of GSS men learn to emotionally detach and seek distance. On the other hand, in contexts where communication is actively promoted, men often perceive the communication as not being directed towards them, leading to their rejection of it. Furthermore, this aligns with the preliminary interview, in which male participants expressed a perceived limitation in their capacity to discuss their emotions and concerns. The range of responses further demonstrates that, while some individuals engage intensively with their families and peers, others remain largely silent on the topic as stated by Scharmanski and Hessling (2022). This further underscores the ambiguity surrounding data pertaining to the influence of parents, as previously highlighted by Cary and Reese-Weber (2021).

Medical professionals were considered a relevant source by about one quarter of respondents, suggesting that health-related consultations can serve as entry points for sex education. This supports findings by Scharmanski and Hessling (2022) who noted that adolescents and emerging adults also actively seek information from professional counselling centres and gynaecological practices.

There were clear gender differences regarding individual reference persons. While men cited their brothers as a relevant source more often, women cited their best friends more often. Furthermore, there was a tendency among women to consult their mothers and doctors as sources of information, although these differences were marginally below the significance threshold. This was also found by Scharmanski and Hessling (2022) who reported similar results, with male participants relying more on fathers and their best friends and female participants relying more on mothers and best friends.

The mean age at which participants first encountered sexual topics was found to be just over 13 years, with men reporting significantly earlier exposure than women. This finding aligns with prior research conducted on GSS (Fournier et al., 2022; Rubin et al., 2019), which indicated that men are more inclined to be sexually assertive and proactive, while women encounter constraints in their sexual agency (Dienberg et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2019). Particularly this result supports the study by Ward et al. (2022), which examined the association between media consumption and GSS in adolescents and emerging adults. According to them, a greater media consumption leads to greater endorsement of GSS. Furthermore, Power et al. (2024) reported an

average media consumption of 7 hours within adolescents. It can thus be posited that the earlier onset of sexuality may be attributable to a combination of factors, including, but not limited to, early socialization through media, as well as influences from family, peers, and social networks. Furthermore, these results may underscore findings reported by Döring (2023), who stated that by the age of 14, two-thirds of male adolescents had engaged in masturbation, in contrast to only one quarter of female adolescents. Consequently, an earlier exposure to sexual subjects may result in an earlier exploration of one's own sexuality.

In terms of preferences for further information via media, digital channels were again central. The internet and social media were prioritized by a majority, while specialist literature and entertainment media followed with medium levels of endorsement. Traditional sources such as magazines, brochures, or exhibitions were mentioned less frequently, and only a small minority expressed no interest in further information. This is in line with several studies (Döring et al., 2022; Power et al., 2024; Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022) stating the importance of digital spaces for sex education. With regard to preferred modes of engagement, participants indicated a clear preference for the written form, followed by visual materials, while auditory formats were consistently the least preferred.

In line with Scharmanski and Hessling (2022) it was found that while search engines (e.g. Google) were used as a source of information by a majority of participants, Wikipedia played a significantly smaller role. More than half of the respondents explicitly stated that they did not use Wikipedia. This result illustrates that participants tend to rely on targeted, individual search processes when it comes to sexual topics, rather than consulting standardized information platforms such as Wikipedia.

Clear usage patterns were also evident within social media. Instagram and YouTube were by far the most frequently used platforms and were thus the central channels for accessing sex-related content. TikTok was mentioned by a third of respondents, with women using the platform significantly more often than men. In addition, there was a trend for women to cite X (formerly Twitter) as a source of information more often. Podcasts and Facebook played a subordinate role. These results confirm the dominance of visually oriented platforms, with TikTok standing out as a particularly female-oriented channel, while classic social networks such as Facebook are hardly relevant anymore.

In summary, the results reveal that emerging adults rely on a wide variety of sources when engaging with sexual topics, averaging seven different reference points. Everyday and low-threshold contexts such as peers, partners, and online media were most central, while institutionalized or formal sources like teachers, brochures, or lectures played only a minor role. Clear gender differences emerged: women reported using a broader range of sources and were more likely to consult mothers, best friends, or doctors, while men more often named brothers and reported earlier exposure to sexual topics. Finally, visually oriented platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok dominated as preferred digital spaces, while more traditional media such as magazines or Wikipedia were less frequently used. These findings highlight the pivotal role of peers and digital media in the sexual socialization of emerging adults and underscore the need for participatory and media-sensitive approaches in sex education.

9.1.2. Self-assessment of knowledge

Overall, participants rated their sexual knowledge as moderate to rather extensive, with only a small minority reporting low levels. No significant associations were found with age, gender, or preferred learning formats. However, subjective knowledge ratings were positively related to communication with both family and friends, as well as to the breadth of information sources consulted. In addition, more than a quarter of participants expressed a desire for further information.

Participants generally rated their own knowledge of sexual topics as relatively high. Almost half of the sample considered their knowledge “rather extensive,” while another third described it as “average.” Only a very small minority reported low levels of knowledge. This distribution suggests that most emerging adults perceive themselves as reasonably well-informed about sexual matters. These results challenge findings by Gamson and Hertz (2023), who reported that participants felt like school-based sex education was insufficient and online sex education at times potentially unreliable, leaving knowledge gaps. This contradiction may be attributed to the fact that participants in the study by Gamson and Hertz (2023) were not asked directly how they assessed their knowledge, but only how they perceived the various sources of knowledge (e.g. school lessons or online sex education). However, the results were consistent with those of the preliminary interviews, in which participants reported being relatively well informed about sexual topics.

No significant differences were found with respect to age or gender, indicating that subjective knowledge assessments levels within these groups are relatively similar. With regard to age, the results are noteworthy, as emerging adulthood is a period during which many sexual experiences are made (Arnett, 2024; Vasilenko, 2021). However, these factors do not appear to influence the evaluation of one's own knowledge over time. The assessment of knowledge by early emerging adults is consistent with that of late emerging adults. The absence of gender disparity is a noteworthy observation. As indicated in the results section, female participants scored significantly higher on the clitoris quiz when compared to male participants, suggesting a higher level of knowledge regarding the subject. This observation suggests the possibility that men's self-perceptions may not fully align with their actual abilities, potentially leading to an overestimation of personal competence. As previously referenced, research has demonstrated that males are typically rewarded for engaging in sexual activity and adopt a dominant role (Fournier et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2022). From this, it could have been deduced that men would also be more confident and self-assured in their assessment of their knowledge, which would support this line of argumentation. Moreover, the absence of gender disparities could be further attributable to the composition of the sample. The study sample consisted of substantially more female participants than male participants. This might be due to the fact that males tend to participate less frequently in conversations related to sexual topics and are more inclined to dismiss sexual discourses (Claussen, 2017; Nikkelen et al., 2020). Thus, it is plausible that the men who did take part represent a self-selected subgroup with above-average interest in sexual topics, thereby attenuating potential gender differences.

Similarly, no associations emerged with preferred learning formats (e.g., written, visual, auditory). This suggests that self-perceived knowledge is not tied to specific modes of media consumption but rather reflects a broader self-evaluation that cuts across different learning styles. This supports the findings of Claussen (2017) who stated that comprehensive sex education should be diverse in their teaching methods, meeting the different needs of participants.

In contrast, significant associations were observed between self-assessed knowledge and the breadth of engagement with sexual information. First, participants who rated their knowledge higher also reported drawing on a wider variety of information sources.

Although this correlation was relatively weak, it indicates that exposure to diverse inputs contributes to subjective feelings of competence. More importantly, self-assessed knowledge was strongly linked to interpersonal conversations: those who described their knowledge as more extensive also tended to engage more in discussions with both family members and friends. These findings underline the role of interpersonal exchange as a central context for constructing and validating sexual knowledge as stated by several authors (Killoren, 2021; Scharmanski & Hessling, 2022). Prior studies have similarly shown that open communication fosters not only factual understanding but also confidence in discussing sexual issues (Döring, 2021; Power et al., 2024). The results therefore support the suggestion that self-perceived literacy is not only a product of information intake but also of dialogical processes in which knowledge is reinforced and negotiated socially (Herdt & Marzullo, 2021; Power et al., 2024).

Despite the relatively high self-ratings, more than a quarter of respondents expressed a desire for further information. No gender disparities were observed in this regard. The topics of interest were broad, but health-related areas such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, and the effects of illnesses or medication on sexuality were particularly prominent. In addition, participants called for more input on sexual practices and techniques, communication and intimacy in relationships, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as psychosocial and legal aspects. This finding resonates with prior work emphasising that formal sex education often leaves important domains underexplored, especially those relating to practical skills, diversity, and relational issues (Seiler-Ramadas et al., 2021). Interestingly the desire for further information significantly correlated negatively with participants' self-assessment of their knowledge. These results contradict findings by Nikkelen et al. (2020) who stated that participants who proved to have more knowledge, were more likely to research information online.

9.1.3. Engagement and the main variables

The results show that both the variety of information sources and communication with friends and family are linked to sexual pleasure, with self-assessed knowledge having the strongest effect. For clitoral knowledge, greater source use, more discussion with friends (but not with family), and higher self-perceived knowledge were consistently associated with higher scores according to sexual pleasure.

These findings are consistent with previous research showing that breadth and depth of engagement contribute to positive sexual experiences by fostering confidence, openness, and communicative competence (Döring, 2021; Hensel et al., 2022; Power et al., 2024). They further support the notion that sexual pleasure is not only a matter of individual experience but is embedded in social interaction and learning processes (Döring & Mohseni, 2022; Laan et al., 2021; Mahar et al., 2020).

In contrast, the findings on (GSS) were less conclusive. For both measures (items based on Rubin et al. (2021) and items based on Amaro et al. (2024)), overall engagement and communicative depth did not predict the endorsement of gendered norms, suggesting that exposure to information or conversations does not automatically translate into critical reflection of cultural scripts. These results contradict findings by earlier studies (Claussen, 2019; Laan et al., 2021; Sa et al., 2021), which stated that diverse and empowering sources of sex education challenge the endorsement of GSS. Interestingly, however, participants' self-assessment of their knowledge showed a significant negative correlation with GSS when measured according to Rubin et al. (2019). This could indicate that individuals who perceive themselves as more competent are more likely to distance themselves from traditional gender norms in sexuality as mentioned by several authors (Claussen, 2017, Sa et al., 2021).

For clitoral knowledge, clear positive associations were observed. Participants who engaged with a broader variety of sources, communicated more intensively with peers, rated their own sexual knowledge higher and gained higher clitoral knowledge scores. These findings underscore that both informational breadth and peer exchange are important pathways for acquiring concrete sexual knowledge (Dienberg et al., 2023). By contrast, family communication showed no significant link, which supports that discussions within families remain more limited in content or less anatomically focused (Killoren, 2021). Importantly, self-assessed knowledge again showed the strongest correlation with clitoral knowledge, reflecting a convergence between subjective and objective measures of sexual literacy. This alignment strengthens the validity of self-assessment as a proxy for actual knowledge in this domain, at least for anatomical content.

Taken together, the analyses reveal that both breadth of engagement with sexual sources and depth of interpersonal communication are positively related to sexual

pleasure, highlighting the social embeddedness of sexual wellbeing. While general engagement did not predict endorsement of GSS, higher self-assessed knowledge was associated with weaker adherence to traditional norms, suggesting that subjective competence may facilitate distancing from restrictive expectations. For clitoral knowledge, both diverse informational input and peer communication proved important, with self-assessed knowledge showing the strongest alignment with objective knowledge. Overall, these findings underscore that sexual literacy is shaped not only by access to information but also by confidence and social exchange, which in turn influence both sexual pleasure and the negotiation of gendered norms.

9.2. Mediation analysis

A central component of this work was the replication of the mediation analysis by Dienberg et al. (2023), which investigated whether GSS mediate the relationship between clitoral knowledge and sexual pleasure. The results of this study partially confirm the postulated model but also reveal important differences depending on the measurement instruments used. Before coming to the results of the mediation analyses, a descriptive overview of the main variables is given. In line with the results section, first the findings based on GSS as measured by Rubin et al. (2019) will be discussed. Subsequently the mediation results as based on Amaro et al. (2024) will be analysed.

9.2.1. Descriptive overview

Descriptive statistics indicated moderate to high levels of sexual pleasure across all three subscales of the ASPI 1.0. Importantly, no significant gender differences emerged for sexual pleasure or for GSS, regardless of whether the Rubin et al. (2019) items or the SDS by Amaro et al. (2024) were used. This contradicts findings by earlier research, which stated that sexual pleasure is higher in men (Dienberg et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2022) and endorsement of GSS is greater within men (Fournier et al., 2022). In contrast, clitoral knowledge showed a clear gender gap, with men reporting higher scores than women. This result is in line with previous studies documenting persistent gender disparities in anatomical knowledge, often at the expense of women (Dienberg et al., 2023). Although the mean values for GSS based on Rubin et al. (2019) and for the SDS by Amaro et al. (2024) appear numerically similar, their substantive meaning differs considerably. A score of around 3 on the Rubin et al. (2019) items

indicates a medium level of endorsement of traditional gendered sexual scripts, whereas a score of around 3 on the SDS reflects an egalitarian orientation, i.e., neither a preference for reversed standards nor for a traditional double standard. Thus, while the descriptive results of both instruments yield comparable averages, they represent distinct positions within different conceptual frameworks. This highlights the importance of carefully considering the operationalization of GSS, as different measures may capture overlapping but not identical dimensions of gendered norms in sexuality. The divergence in interpretation also helps to explain why the mediation analyses yielded different results depending on the instrument applied.

Bivariate correlations confirmed theoretically expected associations. Higher clitoral knowledge was positively associated with sexual pleasure and negatively with the endorsement of GSS. Similarly, greater endorsement of GSS was associated with lower sexual pleasure. These findings echo earlier research linking GSS to more restricted sexual well-being (Klein et al., 2019; Rittenhour & Sauder, 2024; Rubin, 2019), while also supporting the role of sexual knowledge as a resource for positive sexual experiences (Dienberg et al., 2023).

9.2.2. Mediation based on Rubin et al. (2019)

When GSS were operationalized with the items by Rubin et al. (2019), a consistent mediation pattern emerged. Higher clitoral knowledge predicted lower endorsement of GSS, which in turn predicted greater sexual pleasure. This indirect pathway was statistically significant across all three subscales – partner-oriented and self-oriented sexual enjoyment, as well as sexual self-efficacy. Importantly, direct effects of clitoral knowledge on sexual pleasure also remained significant, suggesting that knowledge contributes both directly and indirectly to sexual well-being. Notably, this pattern was only evident within the female sample, replicating the findings of Dienberg et al. (2023). For women, indirect effects via GSS were observed for self-efficacy and self-oriented enjoyment, whereas for partner-oriented enjoyment only a direct effect emerged. In contrast, for men, no such mediation effects were found: clitoral knowledge was not significantly related to GSS, and GSS did not significantly predict sexual pleasure. Instead, men showed only direct associations of knowledge with sexual self-efficacy and self-oriented enjoyment, while partner-oriented sexual enjoyment remained unaffected. The gender-specific pattern was particularly striking for the partner-oriented dimension of sexual enjoyment. While women showed a direct association

between clitoral knowledge and partner-oriented enjoyment, this pathway was unaffected by GSS. This suggests that anatomical knowledge may help women assert their needs in partnered contexts, yet restrictive scripts seem to play a less central role in shaping their partner-related experiences than in their self-oriented pleasure or self-efficacy. By contrast, clitoral knowledge did not translate into greater partner-oriented enjoyment for men, neither directly nor indirectly, indicating that their knowledge primarily benefits their own sexual self-efficacy and self-oriented enjoyment. This asymmetry resonates with the notion that heterosexual scripts continue to prioritize male over female pleasure (Dienberg et al., 2023; Laan et al., 2021) and underlines the need for sex education approaches that explicitly foster partner sensitivity and mutuality in sexual relationships. Overall, these findings underscore the assumption that dismantling restrictive gender norms functions as a key mechanism through which sexual knowledge fosters more fulfilling and self-efficacious sexual experiences – particularly for women.

9.2.3. Mediation based on Amaro et al. (2024)

In contrast, the mediation analysis using the SDS (Amaro et al., 2024) yielded a different pattern. While clitoral knowledge was again negatively associated with GSS/SDS, the latter did not significantly predict sexual pleasure. Accordingly, the indirect effect was not significant, and the relationship between clitoral knowledge and sexual pleasure was carried entirely by the direct path. As outlined above, although the mean SDS score appears numerically comparable to the Rubin et al. (2019) items, it reflects an egalitarian orientation rather than medium endorsement of GSS. This conceptual distinction, combined with the central tendency of the SDS distribution, likely reduced variance and helps explain why no significant mediation effects emerged with this measure. This discrepancy once more underlines the sensitivity of the results to the specific operationalization of GSS: whereas the Rubin et al. (2019) items directly assess endorsement of GSS, the SDS was designed to capture the sexual double standard. Although related, the SDS may not fully encompass the broader construct of GSS.

9.2.4. Integrative interpretation

Taken together, the results replicate and extend previous work: clitoral knowledge consistently predicts sexual pleasure, and – depending on how GSS are assessed –

this relationship is partially mediated by a rejection of restrictive gender norms. These findings underscore the dual importance of both factual anatomical knowledge and critical reflection on gendered expectations for promoting sexual pleasure in emerging adulthood (Dienberg et al., 2023).

9.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

The following section discusses limitations that must be taken into account.

It is important to emphasize that the data was collected using cross-sectional analysis, which means that no causal conclusions can be drawn. Although mediations were tested, strictly speaking only an association structure can be proven, not a temporal sequence. To thoroughly understand the interplay between GSS, clitoral knowledge and sexual pleasure it might be valuable to conduct a longitudinal analysis. Furthermore, questions that arose during the study should be investigated further. A qualitative approach would be helpful to examine the correlations and data found in more detail. Particular attention should be paid to the results of the exploratory research. It would be interesting to conduct focus groups or individual interviews on engagement with sexual topics, similar to the preliminary interview. Another limitation is that the data were collected using a self-assessment questionnaire. Particularly with sensitive topics such as sexuality, it is important to note the potential for distortion due to social desirability or a lack of openness. Memory errors can also have an influence. Here too, a qualitative study design might be valuable, as researchers could get a more nuanced understanding of participants' opinions, values and experiences.

Regarding the measures used, it should be noted that the test-statistical analysis of the ASPI 1.0 did not yield the same structure compared to the original measure. Instead of six different scales, only three emerged in this study, with the *sexual self-efficacy* subscale showing low internal consistency. This should be considered when interpreting the results. Moreover, two different scales with slightly different theoretical foundations were used to measure GSS. On the one hand four items based on Rubin et al. (2019) and on the other hand the SDS created by Amaro et al. (2024). Although the results are comparable, nevertheless they do not measure the same construct, potentially limiting comparability. Future research should therefore aim to further clarify the conceptual boundaries between GSS and the sexual double standard. Ideally, studies would employ multiple validated instruments in parallel to assess the extent to

which they overlap, complement, or diverge. Furthermore, the omitted item of the SDS according to Amaro et al. (2024) is a possible limitation that must be considered. Although the decision to omit the item was made for theoretical reasons, it may after all have had an impact on the results. The clitoris quiz is a relatively new instrument with missing information regarding validation and with no clearly documented reliability values so far. Future research should take these methodological limitations into account and adapt the implementation of the instruments accordingly.

Another limitation is the composition of the sample. On the one hand, various individuals had to be excluded because there were too few cases. The sample therefore had limited diversity. The majority of participants identified as cis-female or cis-male; individuals with non-binary gender identities could not be included in the analysis due to low case numbers. The same applies to the sexual orientation of the individuals and their preferred relationship type. Most individuals described themselves as heterosexual and monogamous. Furthermore, there were significantly more women than men in the sample. This could also distort the results. As already described, women find it easier to communicate about sexuality. This could also be the reason why fewer men participated in the study, and hence these men might present the total population worse than the female sample. Furthermore, the sample is very academic in nature. However, it is particularly important in sexuality research to obtain a holistic picture and to address the needs and behaviours of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Future research should therefore attempt to survey a larger group of diverse individuals. Finally, the present study examined sexuality in the group of emerging adults. Future research could expand the age group and examine sexuality in all age groups.

9.4. Theoretical and practical implications

The present findings offer valuable starting points for further research and practical applications in the field of sexuality among emerging adults. The present findings contribute to theoretical debates on sexual literacy and the role of GSS. First, they underline that sexual literacy should be understood as a multidimensional construct that integrates not only factual anatomical knowledge but also communicative practices and the critical reflection of cultural norms (Power et al., 2024). In particular, the results demonstrate that gendered mechanisms shape how knowledge translates into sexual well-being: while men benefited primarily from direct associations of clitoral knowledge with sexual pleasure, women additionally showed indirect effects through

the rejection of restrictive gender norms. This supports the assumption that dismantling gendered scripts functions as a key mechanism through which sexual knowledge fosters more fulfilling and self-efficacious sexual experiences. Finally, the divergent findings depending on the measurement instrument (Rubin et al., 2019 vs. Amaro et al., 2024) highlight the sensitivity of mediation analyses to different operationalizations and call for further conceptual clarification of what is captured under the label of GSS.

From a practical perspective, the results emphasize the importance of integrating both anatomical knowledge and critical reflection on gender norms into comprehensive sex education. This includes curricula in schools as well as digital sex education formats, as the data confirm that young people primarily draw on online sources and peer communication. Evidence-based online offerings (e.g., on Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok) should therefore be expanded and recognized as legitimate educational tools. Moreover, interventions should adopt a gender-sensitive approach: while men may benefit most from factual sexual knowledge, women appear to profit especially from empowerment strategies that address and deconstruct cultural scripts. Peer-based educational models may be particularly effective, given that friends were cited as central reference persons in acquiring sexual knowledge. Finally, the findings reinforce international calls to acknowledge sexual pleasure as a core component of sexual health and to actively incorporate pleasure-based approaches into public health and educational policy.

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11. List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
α	Cronbachs Alpha
b	Regression coefficient
df	Degrees of freedom
H_1	Alternative hypothesis
M	Mean
N	Sample size
n	Subsample size
p	Significance (p-value)
r_{it}	corrected item total correlation
r	Pearson's correlation coefficient
ρ	Spearman correlation coefficient
SD	Standard deviation
t	t-test statistics (independent sample t-test and paired sample t-test)
d	Cohen's d

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14. Abstract in English

Sexual pleasure is an essential cornerstone of sexual health; at the same time, women report significantly less sexual pleasure than men. Research points in particular to gender-related sexual scripts and gaps in knowledge about female sexuality (e.g. about the clitoris) as possible explanatory factors. Against this background, a quantitative online survey was conducted to examine the influence of clitoral knowledge and gendered sexual scripts on sexual pleasure among emerging adults. In addition, their engagement with sexual topics and how they evaluate their own sexual knowledge were examined. The sample comprised 450 emerging adults, of whom 71.3% were female and 28.7% were male. The survey included the following measurement instruments: self-created questions on engagement with sexual topics (based on Scharmanski and Hessling (2022)), the Amsterdam Sexual Pleasure Inventory (ASPI 1.0; Borgmann et al., 2023) questionnaire to assess sexual pleasure, four items according to Rubin et al. (2019), the Sexual Double Standard questionnaire (Amaro et al., 2024) to assess gender-related scripts, and finally a clitoris quiz to assess clitoris knowledge (Dienberg et al., 2023). The results of the study suggest that there is a correlation between the extent of knowledge about the clitoris and the experience of sexual pleasure. This correlation is mediated by the internalization of gendered sexual scripts. However, the mediation effect described above did not manifest itself in the measurement of norm orientation using a more comprehensive instrument that also included contrary attitudes. According to the results of an exploratory survey, emerging adults engage with a variety of different sources. Low-threshold sources such as peers, the internet and personal experiences were used most frequently. The sample rated their own knowledge as relatively high. The present study provides valuable insight into the sexual socialization of emerging adults. This revealed both a high level of interest in sexual topics and existing gender differences that still disadvantage women. To counteract this, a culture of education should be established in both online and offline spaces that takes a sex-positive approach and adequately addresses the needs of emerging adults.

15. Abstract in German

Sexueller Genuss ist ein wesentlicher Eckpfeiler sexueller Gesundheit; zugleich berichten Frauen signifikant weniger sexuellen Genuss zu empfinden als Männer. Forschung verweist dabei insbesondere auf genderbezogene sexuelle Skripte sowie Wissenslücken bezüglich der weiblichen Sexualität (z. B. zur Klitoris) als mögliche Erklärungsfaktoren. Vor diesem Hintergrund wurde im Rahmen einer quantitativen Online-Umfrage der Einfluss von Klitoris-Wissen und genderbezogenen sexuellen Skripten auf sexuellen Genuss bei Emerging Adults untersucht. Zusätzlich wurde dessen Auseinandersetzung mit sexuellen Themen sowie die Selbsteinschätzung ihres Wissens in diesem Bereich untersucht. Die Stichprobe umfasste 450 Emerging Adults, von denen 71.3 % weiblich und 28.7 % männlich waren. Die Erhebung beinhaltete folgende Messinstrumente: selbst erstellte Fragen zur Auseinandersetzung mit sexuellen Themen (in Anlehnung an Scharmanski und Hessling (2022)), der Fragebogen *Amsterdam Sexual Pleasure Inventory* (ASPI 1.0; Borgmann et al., 2023) zur Erhebung von sexuellem Genuss, vier Items nach Rubin et al. (2019) sowie der Fragebogen *Sexual Double Standard* (Amaro et al., 2024) zur Erhebung von genderbezogenen Skripten und schließlich ein Klitoris-Quiz zur Erhebung von Klitoris-Wissen (Dienberg et al., 2023). Die Ergebnisse der Studie legen nahe, dass ein Zusammenhang zwischen dem Ausmaß des Wissens über die Klitoris und dem Erleben von sexuellem Genuss besteht. Dieser Zusammenhang wird durch die Verinnerlichung von genderbezogenen sexuellen Skripten mediiert. Der zuvor beschriebene Mediationseffekt manifestierte sich jedoch nicht in der Messung der Normorientierung mittels eines umfassenderen Instruments, welches auch konträre Einstellungen miteinbezog. Gemäß den Ergebnissen einer explorativen Erhebung setzen sich Emerging Adults mit einer Vielzahl unterschiedlicher Quellen auseinander. Am häufigsten wurden niederschwellige Quellen wie Peers, Internet und persönliche Erfahrungen genutzt. Die Stichprobe schätzte ihr eigenes Wissen als relativ hoch ein. Die vorliegende Studie ermöglicht einen wertvollen Einblick in die sexuelle Sozialisation von Emerging Adults. Dabei zeigten sich sowohl ein hohes Interesse an sexuellen Themen als auch bestehende Geschlechterunterschiede, die Frauen nach wie vor benachteiligen können. Um diesen entgegenzuwirken, sollten sowohl in online als auch in offline Räumen eine Kultur der Aufklärung etabliert werden, die einen sex-positiven Ansatz verfolgt und adäquat auf die Bedürfnisse von Emerging Adults eingeht.

16. Appendix

16.1. Figures

Figure 3

Scree plot of the factor analysis for the items of the ASPI 1.0

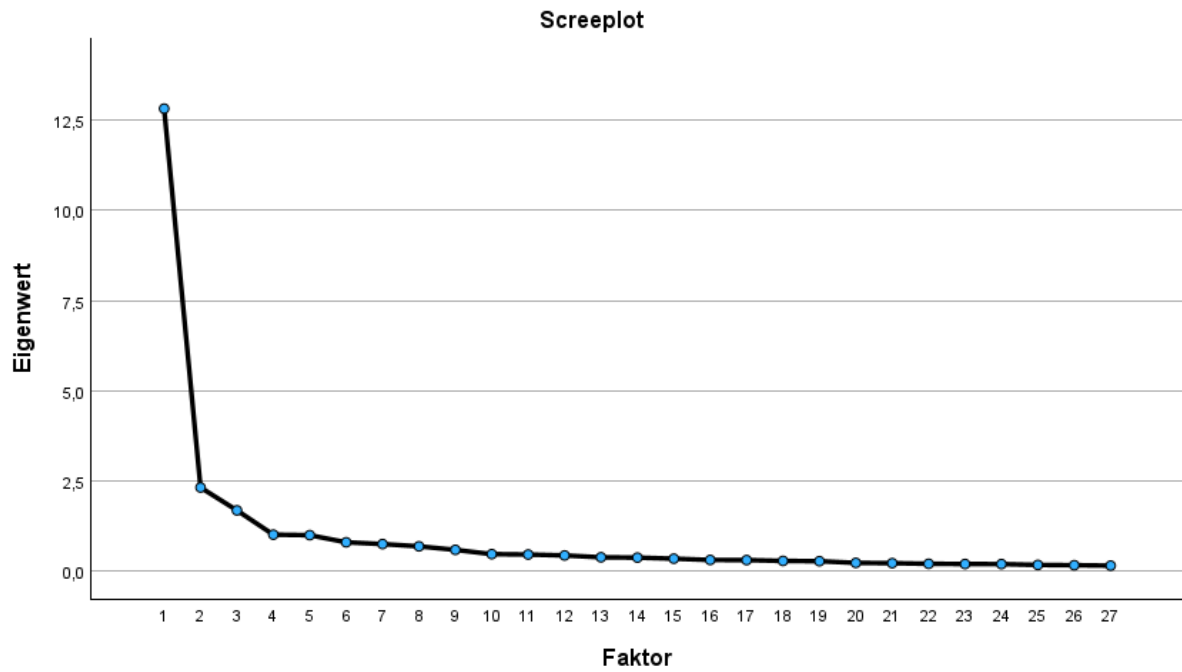


Figure 4

Scree plot of the factor analysis for the GSS items based on Rubin et al. (2019)

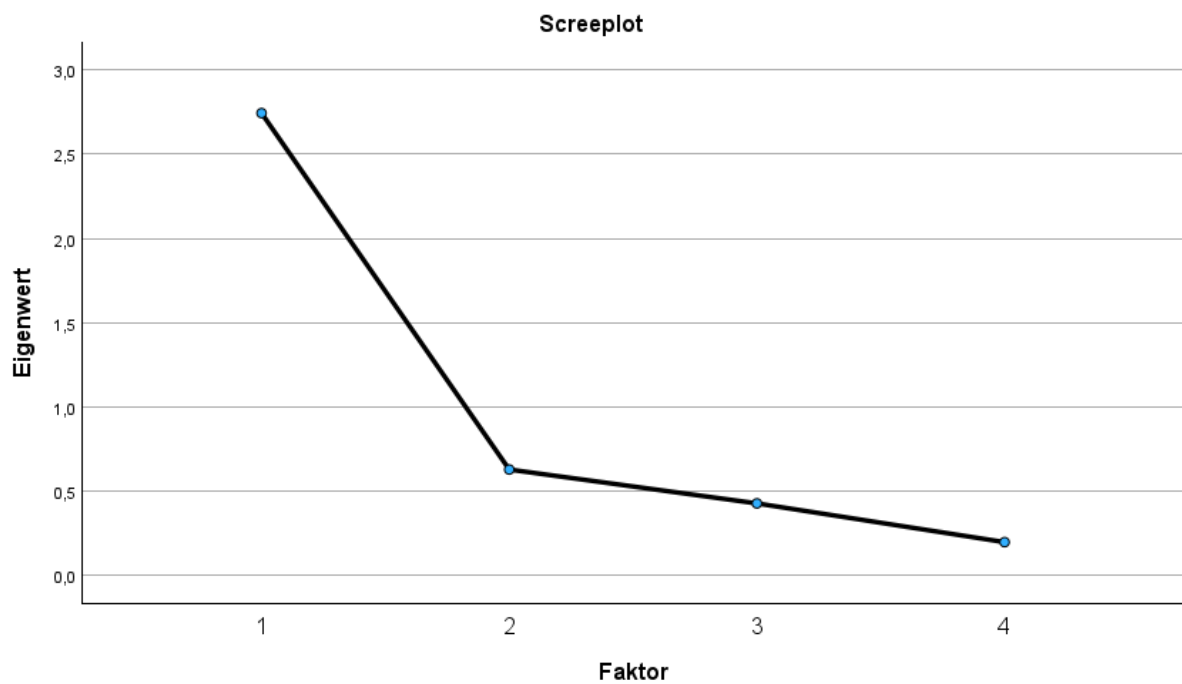


Figure 5

Scree plot of the factor analysis for the items of the SDS

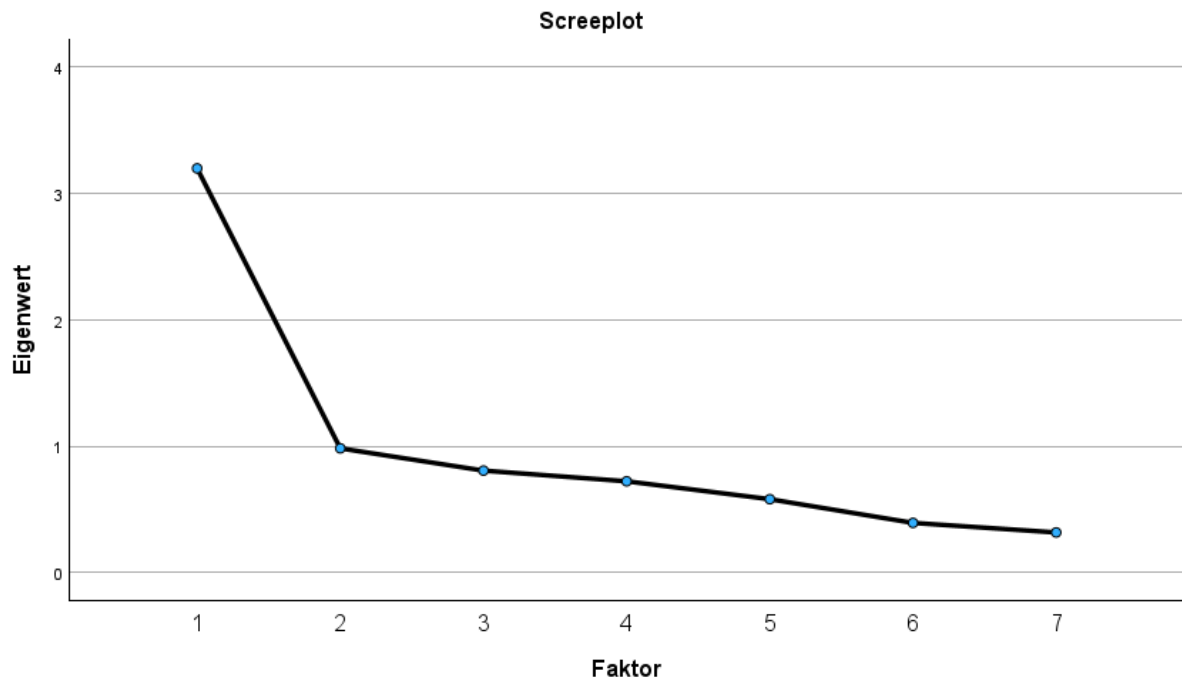
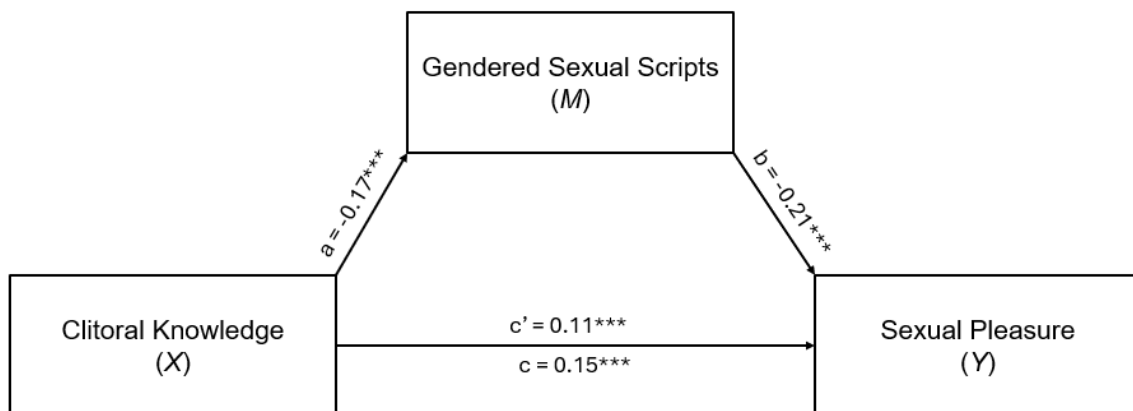


Figure 6

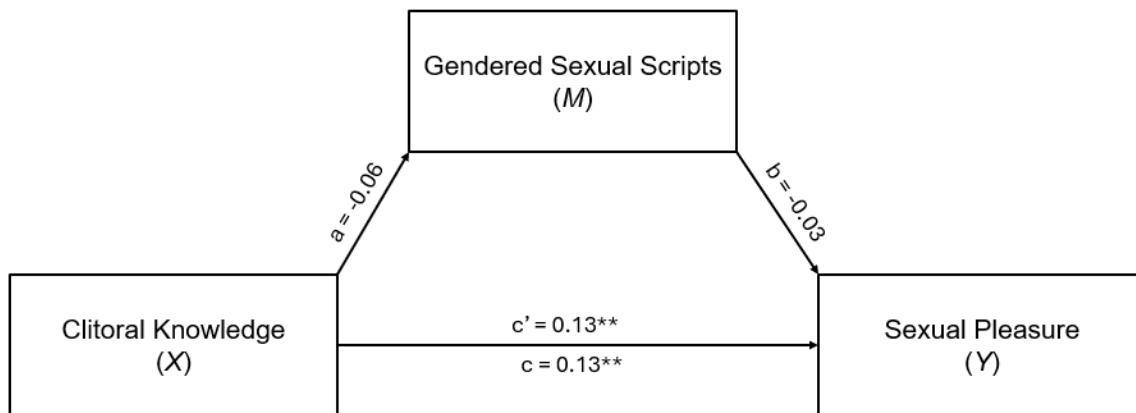
Mediation model of the female sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), sexual pleasure



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 7

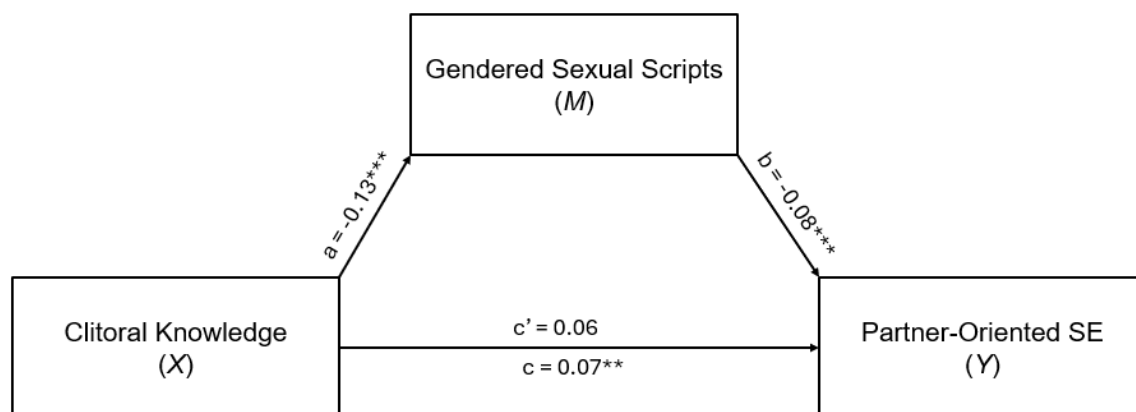
Mediation model of the male sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), sexual pleasure



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 8

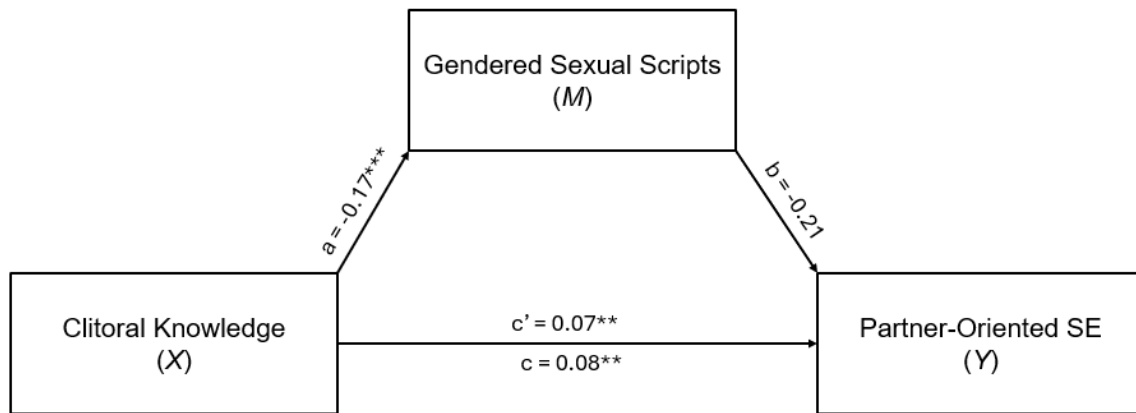
Mediation model of the total sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), partner-oriented sexual enjoyment



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 9

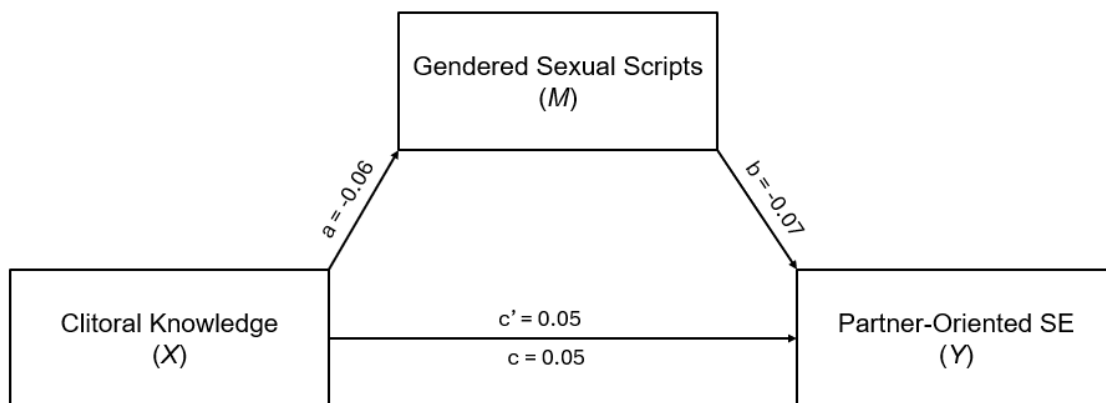
Mediation model of the female sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), partner-oriented sexual enjoyment



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 10

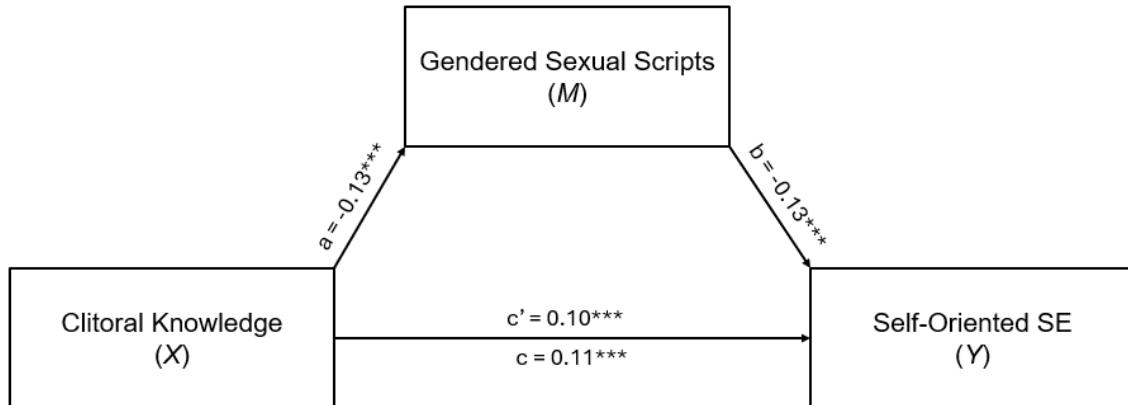
Mediation model of the male sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), partner-oriented sexual enjoyment



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 11

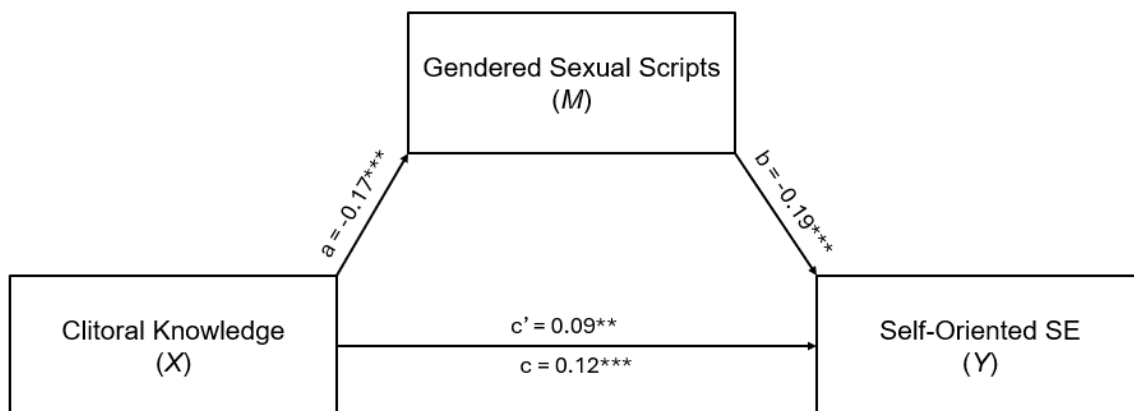
Mediation model of the total sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), self-oriented sexual enjoyment



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 12

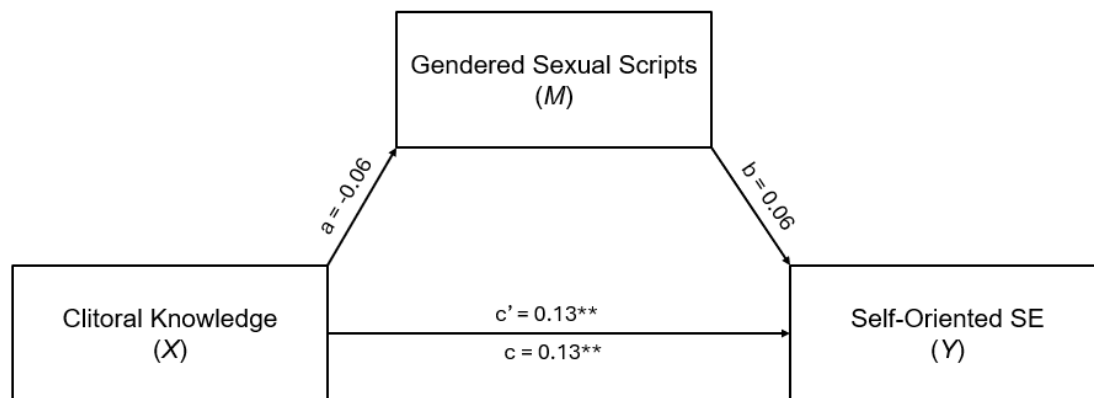
Mediation model of the female sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), self-oriented sexual enjoyment



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 13

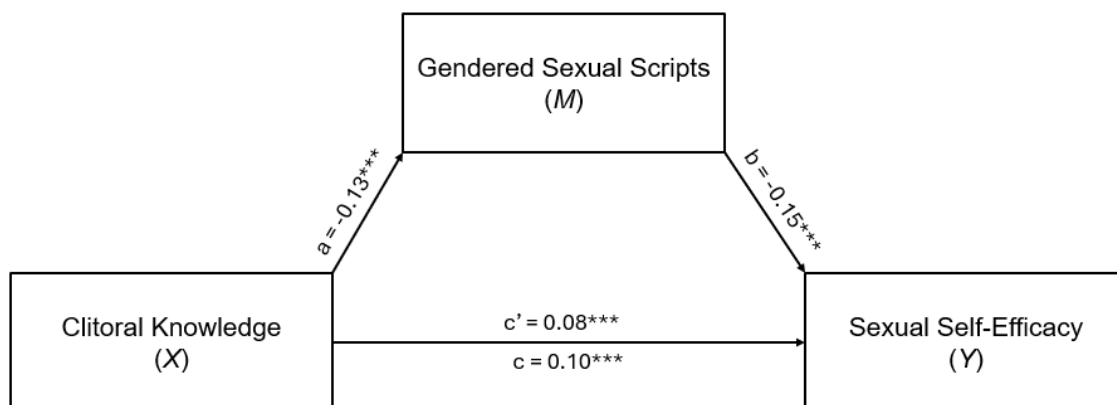
Mediation model of the male sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), self-oriented sexual enjoyment



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 14

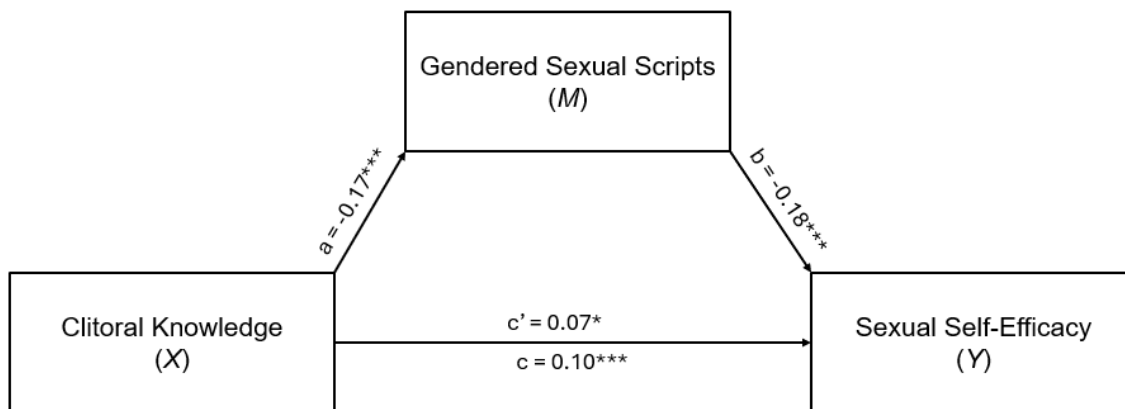
Mediation model of the total sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), sexual self-efficacy



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 15

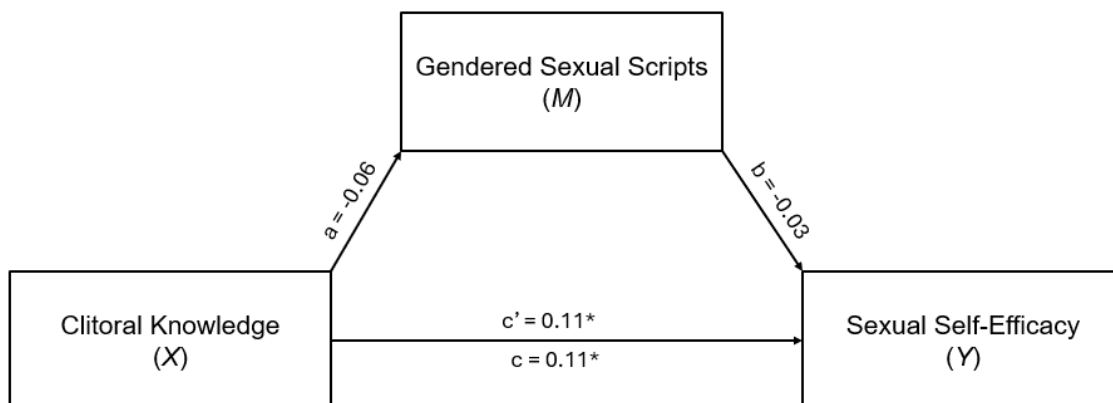
Mediation model of the female sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), sexual self-efficacy



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 16

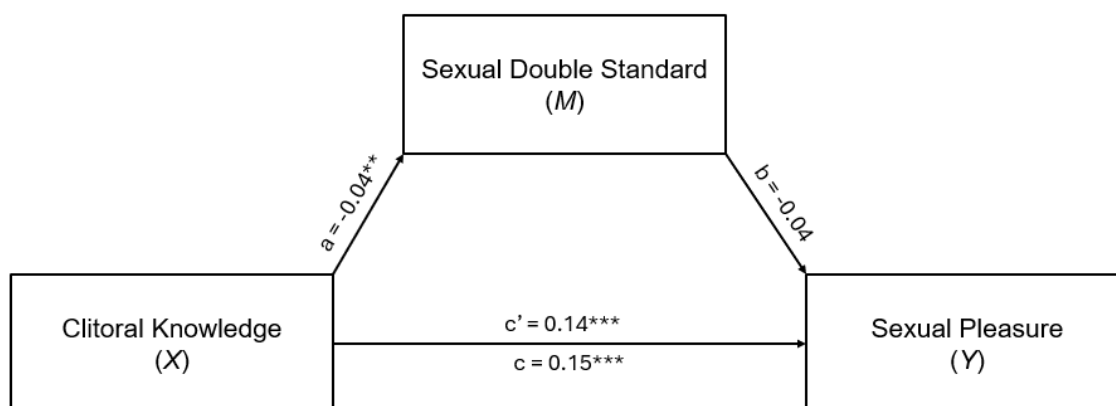
Mediation model of the male sample: clitoral knowledge, gendered sexual scripts (based on Rubin et al. (2019)), sexual self-efficacy



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 17

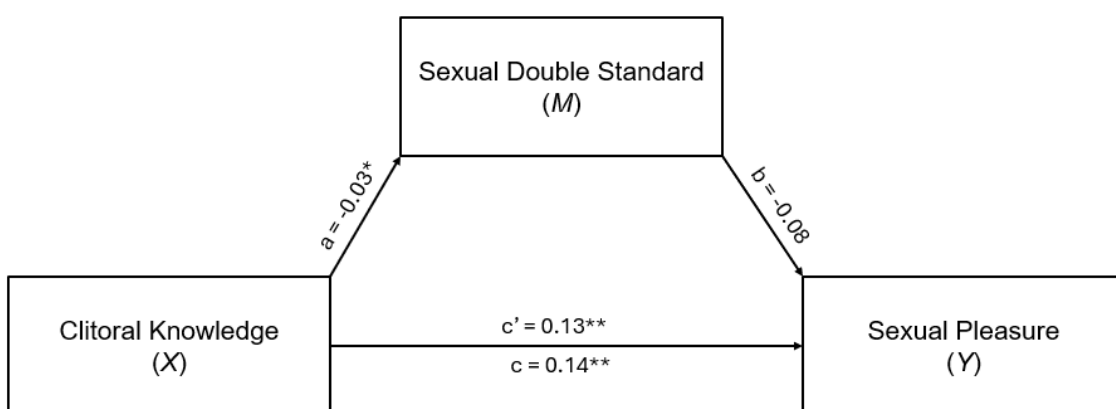
Mediation model of the female sample: clitoral knowledge, sexual double standard (based on Amaro et al. (2019)), sexual pleasure



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 18

Mediation model of the male sample: clitoral knowledge, sexual double standard (based on Amaro et al. (2019)), sexual pleasure



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

16.2. Tables

Table A 4

Frequencies of employment status

Employment status	Frequency	%
Full-time employment	39	8.7
Part-time employment	126	28
Marginal employment	120	26.7
Self-employees	24	5.3
Other	19	4.2
Total	328	100

Note. Only employed participants were included (final sample, $N = 328$).

Table A 5

Frequencies of religious affiliation

Religious affiliation	Frequency	%
Roman Catholic	182	40.4
Protestant	53	11.8
Orthodox	10	2.2
Muslim	14	3.1
Jewish	2	0.4
Hindu	0	0
Buddhist	1	0.2
No religious affiliation	175	38.9
Other	13	2.9
Total	449	100

Table A 6
Frequencies of relationship status

Relationship status	Frequency	%
Monogamous	251	89.6
Open relationship	12	4.3
Polyamorous	5	1.8
Asexual	0	0
“Friends with benefits”	1	0.4
“Situationship”	5	1.8
Other	6	2.1
Total	282	100

Note. Only participants in a relationship were included (final sample, $N = 280$).

Table A 7
Frequencies of preferred relationship statuses

Preferred relationship status	Frequency	%
Single	33	7.3
Monogamous	338	75.1
Open relationship	28	6.2
Polyamorous	10	2.2
Asexual	2	0.4
“Friends with benefits”	13	2.9
“Situationship”	10	2.2
Other	15	3.3
Total	449	100

Table A 8
Frequencies of sexual orientation

Sexual orientation	Frequency	%
Heterosexual	306	68
Homosexual	23	5.1
Bisexual	100	22.2
Asexual	4	0.9
Other	17	3.8
Total	449	100

Table A 9*Principal component analysis of the ASPI 1.0 items*

Rotated component matrix		Component		
Nr.	Item	1	2	3
08	Ich weiß, wie ich meine*n Sexualpartner*in genießen lassen kann.	.58		
15	Es erfüllt mich, wenn mein*e Sexualpartner*in beim Sex genießt.	.78		
16	Ich finde es erregend, meine*n Sexualpartner*in beim Sex genießen zu lassen.	.77		
17	Ich genieße es, mein*en Sexualpartner*in beim Sex zu stimulieren.	.71		
19	Beim Sex genieße ich die Nähe meines*meiner Sexualpartner*in.	.77		
20	Beim Sex fühle ich mich mit meinem*meiner Sexualpartner*in verbunden.	.81		
21	Beim Sex genieße ich die Zuneigung zwischen mir und meinem*meiner Sexualpartner*in.	.83		
22	Beim Sex genieße ich das Gefühl von Geborgenheit.	.73		
23	Sex bringt mich meinem*meiner Sexualpartner*in näher.	.79		
25	Ich genieße Partner*innensex.	.72		
03	Ich liebe das Gefühl, welches mir meine erregten Geschlechtsteile geben.		.63	
10	Ich kann so masturbieren, dass ich es wirklich genieße.		.75	
26	Ich genieße es, über Sex zu fantasieren.		.68	
27	Ich genieße es, zu masturbieren.		.81	
06	Ich weiß mein Sexleben so zu gestalten, dass ich es wirklich genieße.			.68
07	Ich weiß, was ich brauche, um mich sexuell zu vergnügen.			.59
12	Beim Partner*innensex vernachlässige ich mein eigenes Vergnügen.			.75
13	Mein sexuelles Vergnügen ist unbedeutend.			.61

Note. $N = 450$. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Only the highest factor loading per item was reported; values $< .30$ not reported. Factor 1 = partner-oriented sexual enjoyment, Factor 2 = self-oriented sexual enjoyment, Factor 3 = sexual self-efficacy.

Table A 10*Test statistical parameters of the partner-oriented sexual enjoyment scale*

Nr.	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r_{it}</i>
08	Ich weiß, wie ich meine*n Sexualpartner*in genießen lassen kann.	5.02	1.04	.60
15	Es erfüllt mich, wenn mein*e Sexualpartner*in beim Sex genießt.	5.40	.90	.80
16	Ich finde es erregend, meine*n Sexualpartner*in beim Sex genießen zu lassen.	5.32	.95	.77
17	Ich genieße es, meine*n Sexualpartner*in beim Sex zu stimulieren.	5.25	.99	.75
19	Beim Sex genieße ich die Nähe meines*meiner Sexualpartner*in.	5.26	1.01	.78
20	Beim Sex fühle ich mich mit meinem*meiner Sexualpartner*in verbunden.	5.14	1.01	.79
21	Beim Sex genieße ich die Zuneigung zwischen mir und meinem*meiner Sexualpartner*in.	5.32	.98	.80
22	Beim Partner*innensex genieße ich das Gefühl von Geborgenheit.	4.94	1.14	.69
23	Sex bringt mich meinem*meiner Partner*in näher.	5.15	1.02	.75
25	Ich genieße Partner*innensex.	5.24	1.02	.79

Note. Cronbachs $\alpha = .93$ ($N = 449$), $M = 5.20$, $SD = 0.94$.

Table A 11*Test statistical parameters of the self-oriented sexual enjoyment scale*

Nr.	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r_{it}</i>
03	Ich liebe das Gefühl, welches mir meine erregten Geschlechtsteile geben.	4.90	1.09	.54
10	Ich kann so masturbieren, dass ich es wirklich genieße.	4.73	1.26	.68
26	Ich genieße es, über Sex zu fantasieren.	4.94	1.05	.56
27	Ich genieße es, zu masturbieren.	4.65	1.27	.71

Note. Cronbachs α = .80 (N = 449), M = 4.81, SD = 1.16.

Table A 12*Test statistical parameters of the sexual self-efficacy scale*

Nr.	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r_{it}</i>
Trait_6	Ich weiß mein Sexleben so zu gestalten, dass ich es wirklich genieße.	4.50	1.21	.59
Trait_7	Ich weiß, was ich brauche, um mich sexuell zu vergnügen.	4.75	1.06	.52
Trait_12	Beim Partner*innensex vernachlässige ich mein eigenes Vergnügen.	2.88	1.39	.39
Trait_13	Mein sexuelles Vergnügen ist unbedeutend.	4.15	1.09	.49

Note. Cronbachs α = .70 (N = 448), M = 4.07, SD = 1.19.

Table A 13*Second order principal component analysis of the ASPI 1.0*

Skala	Faktor 1
partn_o	.79
self_o	.80
self_eff	.76

Note. Only one factor was extracted, so the solution was not rotated.

Table A 14*Test statistical parameters of the second-order-factor (ASPI 1.0)*

Nr.	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r_{it}</i>
partn_o	Partner-oriented sexual enjoyment scale	5.21	0.81	.52
self_o	Self-oriented sexual enjoyment scale	4.81	0.93	.51
self_eff	Sexual self-efficacy scale	3.84	0.93	.48

Note. Cronbachs α = .69 (N = 447), M = 4.62, SD = 0.89.

Table A 15*Principal component analysis of the GSS-items based on Rubin et al. (2019)*

Nr.	Item	Loading
01	Männer mögen Sex mehr als Frauen.	.83
02	Männer lassen sich durch Sex stärker ablenken als Frauen.	.72
03	Frauen verspüren seltener ein Verlangen nach Sex als Männer.	.90
04	Frauen denken weniger oft an Sex als Männer.	.86

Note. Extraction method: principal component analysis. One factor extracted.

Table A 16*Test statistical parameters of the GSS-items based on Rubin et al. (2019)*

Nr.	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r_{it}</i>
01	Männer mögen Sex mehr als Frauen.	2.69	1.43	.68
02	Männer lassen sich durch Sex stärker ablenken als Frauen.	3.78	1.44	.55
03	Frauen verspüren seltener ein Verlangen nach Sex als Männer.	2.71	1.44	.78
04	Frauen denken weniger oft an Sex als Männer.	2.77	1.49	.72

Note. Cronbachs $\alpha = .85$ ($N = 448$), $M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.44$.

Table A 17*Principal component analysis of the SDS*

Nr.	Item	Loading
01	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie großen Gefallen an Sex findet?	.48
02	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie mehrere Partner*innen hat?	.74
03	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher den Konsum von Pornografie?	.61
04	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie in derselben Zeitspanne mit verschiedenen Sexualpartner*innen ein Verhältnis hat?	.80
05	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie die Initiative für eine sexuelle Interaktion ergreift?	.53
06	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie sich häufig auf unverbindliche Beziehungen einlässt?	.77
07	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie sich auf jemanden einlässt, zu dem*der keine emotionale Bindung besteht?	.74

Note. Extraction method: principal component analysis. One factor extracted.

Table A 18*Comparison of the original items on the SDS and their German translation*

Nr.	Original item	Translation
01	From whom do you more easily accept involvement in frequent casual relationships?	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie sich häufig auf unverbindliche Beziehungen einlässt?
02	From whom do you more easily accept involvement with multiple partners?	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie mehrere Partner*innen hat?
03	From whom do you more easily accept involvement with different sexual partners in the same period of time?	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie in derselben Zeitspanne mit verschiedenen Sexualpartner*innen ein Verhältnis hat?
04	From whom do you more easily accept involvement with someone to whom one is not emotionally attached?	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie sich auf jemanden einlässt, zu dem*der keine emotionale Bindung besteht?
05	From whom do you more easily accept that they enjoy sex a lot?	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie großen Gefallen an Sex findet?
06	Of whom do you more easily accept the use of pornography?	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher den Konsum von Pornografie?
07	From whom do you more easily accept taking the initiative for a sexual encounter?	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie die Initiative für eine sexuelle Interaktion ergreift?

Table A 19*Test statistical parameters of the SDS*

Nr.	Item	M	SD	r_{it}
01	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie großen Gefallen an Sex findet?	2.96	.64	.36
02	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie mehrere Partner*innen hat?	2.99	.65	.58
03	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher den Konsum von Pornografie?	3.03	.71	.46
04	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie in derselben Zeitspanne mit verschiedenen Sexualpartner*innen ein Verhältnis hat?	3.00	.60	.65
05	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie die Initiative für eine sexuelle Interaktion ergreift?	3.04	.73	.40
06	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie sich häufig auf unverbindliche Beziehungen einlässt?	3.07	.59	.62
07	Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie sich auf jemanden einlässt, zu dem*der keine emotionale Bindung besteht?	3.14	.67	.58

Note. Cronbachs $\alpha = .79$ ($N = 448$), $M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.66$.

Table A 20

Mean differences in sources used for engagement with sexual topics based on gender – independent sample t-test

item	Gender	N	M	SD	$t(445)$	p	d
sources used	Female	319	7.33	2.26	3.04	.002	.32
	Male	128	6.61	2.22			

Table A 21*Gender differences in use of various sources of information on sexuality (N = 447).*

Source	Female %	Male %	Total %	$\chi^2(1)$	<i>p</i>
Communication with others	94.7	91.4	93.7	1.66	.20
Lectures	31.7	25.8	30.0	1.51	.22
School based sex education	74.6	71.9	73.8	0.35	.55
Expert literature	38.1	31.3	36.1	1.83	.18
Entertainment literature	57.1	35.2	50.8	17.52	<.001
Magazines	48.9	25.8	42.3	20.01	<.001
Educational brochures	30.1	15.6	26.0	9.95	.002
Movies	52.8	44.5	50.4	2.51	.11
Pornography	38.4	70.3	47.5	37.35	<.001
Podcasts	41.5	22.7	36.1	14.06	<.001
Documentaries	31.0	31.3	31.1	0.00	.97
Computer games	3.1	12.5	5.8	14.55	<.001
Internet	94.4	91.4	93.5	1.31	.25
Personal experience	91.8	90.6	91.5	0.20	.66
Other	5.9	1.8	4.7	3.07	.08

Table A 22*Descriptive statistics for age of first contact with sexual topics and mean differences based on gender – independent sample t-test*

Item	Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (445)	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
First contact	Overall	443	3	25	13.26	2.61	—	—	—
	Female	316	3	25	13.47	2.74	—	—	—
	Male	127	5	19	12.72	2.17	2.79	.006	.29

Table A 23

Descriptive statistics & mean differences based on gender for communication with friends and family

Item	Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Family	Overall	425	0.00	3.00	1.19	0.94	—	—	—
	Female	302	0.00	3.00	1.23	0.94	—	—	—
	Male	123	0.00	3.00	1.11	0.94	$t(423) = 1.19$	.235	0.12
Friends	Overall	447	0.00	3.00	2.51	0.71	—	—	—
	Female	319	0.00	3.00	2.55	0.69	—	—	—
	Male	128	0.00	3.00	2.41	0.75	$t(445) = 1.81$	.071	0.17

Table A 24

*Gender differences in participants most important person of reference regarding sexual information (*N* = 447).*

Source	Female %	Male %	Total %	$\chi^2 (df=1)$	<i>p</i>
Vather	0.9	2.3	1.3	1.36	.244
Mother	13.5	7.0	11.6	3.70	.055
Teacher	0.9	2.3	1.3	1.36	.244
Doctor	28.8	20.3	26.4	3.42	.064
Brother	0.6	5.5	2.0	10.85	<.001
Sister	10.0	5.5	8.7	2.39	.122
Romantic partner	72.7	74.2	73.2	0.10	.748
Best friend	86.5	75.0	83.2	8.68	.003
Peers	36.7	31.3	35.1	1.18	.277
Other	2.5	2.3	2.5	0.01	.919

Table A 25*Gender differences in the wish of further information sources.*

Source	Female %	Male %	Total %	χ^2 (df=1)	p
Scientific literature	48.6	38.3	45.6	3.91	.048
Fiction literature	37.0	23.4	33.1	7.58	.006
Magazines	22.9	21.1	22.4	0.17	.681
Public lectures	29.5	22.7	27.5	2.13	.145
Brochures	28.8	20.3	26.4	3.42	.064
Movies	30.4	22.7	28.2	2.71	.100
Social media	57.4	37.5	51.7	14.44	<.001
Internet	63.3	66.4	64.2	0.38	.539
Exhibitions	29.5	18.0	26.2	6.25	.012
No further information	9.7	15.6	11.4	3.15	.076

Table A 26*Gender differences in the use of internet-based sources for sexual information (N = 287).*

Source	Female %	Male %	Total %	χ^2 (df = 1)	p
Search engines	97.5	94.1	96.5	2.07	.151
Wikipedia	16.8	28.2	20.2	4.83	.028
Other	16.3	16.5	16.4	0.00	.978

Table A 27*Thematic summary of write-in further internet sources (N = 46)*

Theme	Frequencies %	
AI tools / chatbots (ChatGPT, “KI/AI”)	13	28
YouTube (incl. video essays, Reddit, YouTube feed)	11	24
Forums & similar (Reddit, PlanetLiebe, Quora, general forums)	8	17
Podcasts	5	11
General social media (Instagram, TikTok)	3	7
Erotic/sex-positive platforms (Erika Lust, Femtasy, Female Company/Joyclub)	3	7
Academic / documents (PubMed; online PDFs & books)	2	4
No active search / passive consumption	2	4
Websites (unspecified)	1	2
Other platforms (AO3)	1	2

Note. Percentages refer to the share of 46 write-in responses that mention each theme. Because responses could include multiple themes, they were coded more than once, so percentages can sum to more than 100%.

Table A 28*Gender differences in social media sources.*

Source	Female %	Male %	Total %	χ^2 (df = 1)	p
YouTube	53.6	64.6	55.8	1.88	.171
Facebook	0.5	2.1	0.9	1.05	.306
Instagram	72.7	64.6	71.0	1.21	.271
TikTok	32.2	10.4	27.7	9.04	.003
X	1.6	6.3	2.6	3.20	.074
Podcasts	7.7	10.4	8.2	0.39	.535

Table A 29*Preferred formats for sex education content (N = 447)*

Format	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)
Auditory	104 (23.3)	156 (34.9)	185 (41.4)
Visual	150 (33.6)	158 (35.3)	137 (30.6)
Schriftlich (Literatur)	191 (42.7)	131 (29.3)	123 (27.5)

Table A 30*Overall distribution of knowledge assessment ratings.*

Rating	<i>n</i>	%
Low	2	0.4
Rather low	21	4.7
Average	160	35.8
Rather extensive	196	43.8
Extensive	68	15.2
Total	447	100.0

Table A 31*Correlation between knowledge assessment and number of information sources*

Variable	1	2
1. Knowledge assessment	—	.13**
2. Number of information sources	.13**	—

Note. N = 447. **p < .01.

Table A 32*Spearman correlations between knowledge assessment and preferred formats*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Knowledge assessment	—	.07	.02	-.08
2. Auditory (e.g., podcasts)	.07	—	-.46**	-.49**
3. Visual (e.g., videos)	.02	-.46**	—	-.54**
4. Written (e.g., scientific texts)	-.08	-.49**	-.54**	—

Table A 33*Correlation between knowledge assessment and communication with family and friends*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Knowledge assessment	—	.13**	.22**
2. Communication: family	.13**	—	—
3. Communication: friends	.22**	—	—

Table A 34*Desire for further information.*

Rating	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	124	71.8
No	321	27.7
Total	445	100.0

Table A 35*Thematic summary of write-in further topics of interest (N = 54)*

Theme	Frequencies	%
General interest	19	35
Communication & relationships (open, polyamory, partner seeking)	16	30
Contraception (non-hormonal, male & queer methods)	15	28
Female orgasm / female pleasure	13	24
STI / safer sex Miscellaneous other specific topics	10	19
Life stages (cycle, pregnancy, menopause)	10	19
Queer / same-sex sexuality	9	17
BDSM / kinks / fetish (incl. safety & aftercare)	6	11
Sexual health issues (pain, vaginismus, endometriosis, libido loss)	5	9
Asexuality	3	6
Pornography (depictions, effects)	2	4
Masturbation	2	4
Cultural differences in sexuality	2	4
Consent	1	2
Sexual development (adolescence)	1	2

Note. Percentages are the share of 54 write-ins that mention each theme. Because responses could include multiple themes, they were coded more than once; thus percentages can sum to more than 100%.

Table A 36*Desire for further information by self-estimated knowledge.*

Knowledge	Yes %	No %
Little	50.0	50.0
Rather little	35.0	65.0
Average	36.3	63.7
Rather big	23.1	76.9
Big	19.1	80.9
Total	27.9	72.1

Table A 37*Desire for further information by number of sources used (collapsed groups).*

Sources used	Yes %	No %
1–2	20.0	80.0
3–5	26.1	73.9
6–8	25.1	74.9
9–11	31.1	68.9
12–14	56.3	43.8
Total	27.9	72.1

Table A 38
Descriptive statistics of main study variables

Variable	N	M	SD	Range
Partner-oriented sexual enjoyment		5.21	0.81	1–7
Self-oriented sexual enjoyment		4.81	0.93	1–7
Sexual self-efficacy		3.84	0.93	1–7
Sexual pleasure (2nd-order factor)		0.00	1.00	z-score
GSS (Rubin et al., 2019)		3.03	0.44	1–5
SDS (Amaro et al., 2024)		2.97	1.18	1–5
Clitoral knowledge		5.15	1.88	0–9

Table A 39
Mean differences in the scales by gender — independent samples t-tests (combined)

Scale	Female M	SD	Male M	SD	<i>t</i> (445)	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Sexual pleasure (second-order factor)	–0.04	1.02	0.09	0.95	–1.23	.22	–.13
Partner-oriented sexual enjoyment	5.18	0.85	5.30	0.70	–1.42	.16	–.15
Self-oriented sexual enjoyment	4.77	0.95	4.89	0.87	–1.22	.22	–.13
Sexual self-efficacy	3.84	0.94	3.85	0.92	–0.14	.89	–.01
GSS (Rubin et al., 2019)	3.02	1.22	2.90	1.13	0.98	.33	.10
SDS	3.02	0.48	3.06	0.30	–0.96	.34	–.10
Clitoris Quiz (CQ)	5.40	1.82	4.52	1.89	4.53	< .001	.48

Table A 40*Mean differences in the scales by age groups – independent sample t-test*

Scale	Female M	SD	Male M	SD	<i>t</i> (445)	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Sexual pleasure (second-order factor)	−0.04	1.02	0.09	0.95	−1.23	.22	−.13
Partner-oriented sexual enjoyment	5.18	0.85	5.30	0.70	−1.42	.16	−.15
Self-oriented sexual enjoyment	4.77	0.95	4.89	0.87	−1.22	.22	−.13
Sexual self-efficacy	3.84	0.94	3.85	0.92	−0.14	.89	−.01
GSS (Rubin et al., 2019)	3.02	1.22	2.90	1.13	0.98	.33	.10
SDS	3.02	0.48	3.06	0.30	−0.96	.34	−.10
Clitoris Quiz (CQ)	5.40	1.82	4.52	1.89	4.53	< .001	.48

Table A 41*Correlations between sexual pleasure, clitoral knowledge, and gendered sexual scripts (GSS)*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Sexual pleasure	—	.24***	−.28***	−.11*
2. Clitoral knowledge		—	−.21***	−.20***
3. GSS (Rubin et al., 2019)			—	.25***
4. GSS (Amaro et al., 2024)				—

Note. *N* = 447. **p* < .05, ****p* < .001.

16.3. Questionnaire

Seite 01
PI

PI01

Einverständniserklärung

Liebe*r Teilnehmer*in,

vielen Dank für Ihr Interesse an dieser Studie!

Im Rahmen meiner Masterarbeit an der Fakultät für Psychologie der Universität Wien untersuche ich, welchen Einfluss das Wissen über sexuelle Themen auf das Erleben von sexuellem Genuss hat.

Die Teilnahme richtet sich ausschließlich an Personen im Alter von **18 bis 29 Jahren**.

Da es um Ihre persönliche Einschätzung geht, gibt es **keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten**. Bitte wählen Sie jeweils die Antwort aus, die am ehesten auf Sie zutrifft.

Die Studie dient ausschließlich wissenschaftlichen Zwecken. Ihre Angaben werden streng **vertraulich** behandelt und nur in **anonymisierter Form** gespeichert, sodass keine Rückschlüsse auf Ihre Person möglich sind. Das Bearbeiten der Studie kann **jederzeit abgebrochen** werden.

Die Bearbeitungsdauer dieser Studie beträgt in etwa **15 Minuten**. Bitte beantworten Sie möglichst alle Fragen, da nur **vollständig** ausgefüllte Fragebögen in die Auswertung mit einbezogen werden können.

Mit dem Klick auf „Weiter“ stimmen Sie den Teilnahmebedingungen zu.

Bei Fragen können Sie sich gerne an diese E-Mail-Adresse wenden:

rueckmeldung.masterarbeit@gmx.at

1. Wie alt sind Sie?

SD01

Bitte geben Sie Ihr Alter in Jahren an.

2. Welchem Geschlecht würden Sie sich zuordnen?

SD02

- ☐ Weiblich
☐ Männlich
☐ Divers

☐ Anderes:

3. Wie würden Sie Ihre sexuelle Orientierung beschreiben?

SD03

- ☐ Heterosexuell
☐ Homosexuell
☐ Bisexuell
☐ Asexuell

☐ Andere:

4. Sind Sie derzeit in einer romantischen Beziehung?

SD04

- ☐ Ja
☐ Nein

1 aktive(r) Filter

Filter SD04/F1

Wenn eine der folgenden Antwortoption(en) ausgewählt wurde: 1
Dann Frage/Text **SD13** später im Fragebogen anzeigen (sonst ausblenden)

5. In welcher Beziehungsform leben Sie momentan?

SD13

- ☐ Monogame Beziehung
- ☐ Offene Beziehung
- ☐ Polyamore Beziehung
- ☐ Asexuelle Beziehung
- ☐ „Freundschaft Plus“
- ☐ „Situationship“

☐ Andere:

6. Wie ist Ihre bevorzugte Beziehungsform?

SD05

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Monogame Beziehung
- ☐ Offene Beziehung
- ☐ Polyamore Beziehung
- ☐ Asexuelle Beziehung
- ☐ „Freundschaft plus“
- ☐ „Situationship“

☐ Andere:

7. Welchen höchsten Bildungsabschluss haben Sie?

SD06

- ☐ Kein Schulabschluss
- ☐ Pflichtschulabschluss
- ☐ Abschluss einer fach- oder berufsbildenden Schule ohne Matura/Abitur
- ☐ Allgemeine oder fachgebundene Hochschulreife/Matura/Abitur (AHS, BHS, ...)
- ☐ Universitätsabschluss oder Hochschulabschluss

☐ Anderer Bildungsabschluss:

8. Befinden Sie sich in Ausbildung?

SD07

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nein

9. Sind sie Erwerbstätig?

SD08

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nein

10. Welches Religionsbekenntnis haben Sie?

SD11 

- ☐ Römisch-katholisch
- ☐ Evangelisch
- ☐ Orthodox
- ☐ Muslimisch
- ☐ Jüdisch
- ☐ Hinduistisch
- ☐ Buddhistisch
- ☐ Ohne Bekenntnis
- ☐ Eine andere Religion oder Weltanschauung:

11. Wie würden Sie Ihre persönliche Religiosität beschreiben?

SD12 

- ☐ Sehr religiös
- ☐ Religiös
- ☐ Eher nicht religiös
- ☐ Überhaupt nicht religiös

12. Im Vergleich zu anderen, die in diesem Land leben, wie viel kann sich Ihre Herkunftsfamilie aus Ihrer Sicht leisten?

SD16

- ☐ Wenig
- ☐ Eher wenig
- ☐ Durchschnittlich
- ☐ Eher viel
- ☐ Viel

13. Welchen höchsten Bildungsabschluss hat Ihre Mutter?

SD16

- ☐ Kein Schulabschluss
- ☐ Pflichtschulabschluss
- ☐ Abschluss einer fach- oder berufsbildenden Schule ohne Matura/Abitur
- ☐ Allgemeine oder fachgebundene Hochschulreife/Matura/Abitur (AHS, BHS, ...)
- ☐ Universitätsabschluss oder Hochschulabschluss

☐ Anderer Bildungsabschluss:

14. Welchen höchsten Bildungsabschluss hat Ihr Vater?

SD17

- ☐ Kein Schulabschluss
- ☐ Pflichtschulabschluss
- ☐ Abschluss einer fach- oder berufsbildenden Schule ohne Matura/Abitur
- ☐ Allgemeine oder fachgebundene Hochschulreife/Matura/Abitur (AHS, BHS, ...)
- ☐ Universitätsabschluss oder Hochschulabschluss

☐ Anderer Bildungsabschluss:

Im folgenden Fragebogen finden Sie eine Reihe von Fragen zur sexuellen Bildung und Ihren Informationsquellen zu diesem Thema. Bitte beantworten Sie jede Frage sorgfältig und wählen Sie die Antwort(en), die am besten auf Sie zutreffen. Mehrfachnennungen sind, sofern angegeben, möglich. SB01

15. Woher stammen Ihre Kenntnisse über Sexualität, Fortpflanzung, Empfängnisverhütung, usw. überwiegend? Kreuzen Sie in jeder Zeile entweder „Ja“ oder „Nein“ an. SB02

	Ja	Nein
Kommunikation mit anderen	☐	☐
Vorträge	☐	☐
Schulunterricht	☐	☐
Fachliteratur	☐	☐
Belletristik/Unterhaltungsliteratur	☐	☐
Zeitschriften	☐	☐
Kostenlose Aufklärungsbroschüren	☐	☐
Spielfilme	☐	☐
Pornos	☐	☐
Dokumentarfilme	☐	☐
Podcasts	☐	☐
Computerprogramme, -spiele	☐	☐
Internet	☐	☐
Eigenes Erleben	☐	☐
Sonstiges:	☐	☐

16. Wie alt waren Sie als Sie begonnen haben sich für sexuellen Themen zu interessieren? SB03

17. Wird bei Ihnen im Familienkreis über Sexualität gesprochen? SB05

- ☐ ja
☐ eher ja
☐ eher nein
☐ nein
☐ nur mit bestimmten Personen:

SB06

18. Wird bei Ihnen im Freundeskreis über Sexualität gesprochen?

- ☐ ja
☐ eher ja
☐ eher nein
☐ nein

19. Welche sind heute für Sie die wichtigsten Personen wenn es um Informationen zu sexuellen Themen geht?

SB07

(Mehrfachnennung möglich)

- ☐ Vater
☐ Mutter
☐ Lehrpersonen
☐ Ärzt*innen
☐ Bruder
☐ Schwester
☐ Freund*in/Partner*in
☐ Die besten Freund*innen
☐ Andere Gleichaltrige
☐ Sonstige Personen:

20. Gibt es Themen zu denen Sie noch weitere Informationen erhalten möchten?

SB08

- ☐ Ja:

☐ Nein

21. Bitte ordnen Sie die folgenden drei Formen danach, wie Sie sich am liebsten mit sexuellen Themen auseinandersetzen – beginnend mit Ihrer bevorzugten Form (1) bis hin zur am wenigsten bevorzugten (3). Ziehen Sie dazu die Antwortoptionen auf die entsprechenden Zahlen.

SB17

Auditiv (z.B.
Podcasts)

Visuell (z.B.
Videos)

Schriftlich (z.B.
Fachliteratur)

1

2

3

SB09

22. Durch welche Medien würden Sie am liebsten über die von Ihnen genannten Themenbereiche weitere Informationen erhalten?

Mehrfachnennung möglich.

- ☐ Fachliteratur
- ☐ Unterhaltungsliteratur
- ☐ Zeitschriften
- ☐ Öffentliche Vorträge
- ☐ Kostenlose Aufklärungsbroschüren
- ☐ Filme
- ☐ Soziale Medien
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Öffentliche Ausstellungen
- ☐ Ich möchte keine weiteren Informationen

2 aktive(r) Filter

Filter SB09/F1

Wenn eine der folgenden Antwortoption(en) ausgewählt wurde: **8**

Dann Frage/Text **SB14** später im Fragebogen anzeigen (sonst ausblenden)

Filter SB09/F2

Wenn eine der folgenden Antwortoption(en) ausgewählt wurde: **9**

Dann Frage/Text **SB15** später im Fragebogen anzeigen (sonst ausblenden)

23. Welchen sozialen Medien nutzen Sie, um Informationen über sexuelle Themen zu erhalten?

SB14

- ☐ Youtube
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ TikTok
- ☐ X
- ☐ Podcasts
- ☐ Sonstiges, und zwar:

24. Wie nutzen Sie das Internet, um Informationen über sexuelle Themen zu erhalten?

SB15

- ☐ Suchmaschinen (z.B. Google, Chrome,...)
- ☐ Wikipedia
- ☐ Sonstige, und zwar:

25. Haben sich Ihre bevorzugten Informationsquellen im Laufe der Zeit verändert?

SB13

- ☐ Ja, weil:
- ☐ Nein

26. Wie gut schätzen Sie Ihr eigenes Wissen zu sexuellen Themen ein?

SB16

- ☐ Gering
- ☐ Eher gering
- ☐ Durchschnittlich
- ☐ Eher umfangreich
- ☐ Umfangreich

27. Dieser Fragebogen bezieht sich auf Ihr Erleben von Sexualität.

Im Fragebogen kommt häufig das Wort „Sex“ vor. Mit diesem Wort sind nicht nur vaginale oder anale Penetration oder genitale Stimulation gemeint, sondern alle sexuellen Handlungen, die zu sexueller Erregung oder Vergnügen führen können.

Zudem kommt häufig das Wort „Partnersex“ vor. Damit ist „Sex“ mit einer anderen Person, Ihrem/Ihrer „Sexualpartner*in“, gemeint. Damit ist nicht nur eine*n feste*n Partner*in gemeint, sondern auch jemanden, mit dem Sie nur einmal sexuell aktiv waren. Denken Sie bei den Fragen mit Bezug auf „meine*n Sexpartner*in“, an diejenige Person, die am besten dazu passt, wie Sie Sexualität im Allgemeinen erleben.

Weiters wird der Begriff „erogene Zonen“ verwendet. Erogene Zonen sind Bereiche des Körpers, die, wenn sie durch Sie oder jemand anderen angefasst werden, lustvolle Gefühle auslösen können. Diese Bereiche können von Person zu Person unterschiedlich sein.

	stimme überhaupt nicht zu	stimme nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	stimme eher zu	stimme zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
Ich genieße es, wenn mein Körper auf sexuelle Reize reagiert.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich genieße es, über Sex zu fantasieren.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich kann so masturbieren, dass ich es wirklich genieße.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich liebe das Gefühl, welches mir meine erregten Geschlechtsteile geben.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich genieße es, meine*n Sexualpartner*in beim Sex zu stimulieren.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beim Sex fühle ich mich mit meinem/meiner Sexualpartner*in verbunden.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beim Partner*innensex genieße ich das Gefühl von Geborgenheit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich weiß, was ich brauche, um mich sexuell zu vergnügen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich bin es wert, dass mir mein*e Sexualpartner*in sexuelles Vergnügen bereitet.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beim Partner*innensex vernachlässige ich mein eigenes Vergnügen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich genieße es, wenn meine Sexualpartner*in mich beim Sex stimuliert.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich kann Partner*innensex so gestalten, dass ich es wirklich genieße.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich liebe es, wenn meine erogenen Zonen berührt werden.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sex bringt mich meinem/meiner Partner*in näher.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich finde es erregend, meine*n Sexualpartner*in beim Sex genießen zu lassen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich weiß, wie ich meine*n Sexualpartner*in genießen lassen kann.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich liebe es, sexuelle Erregung zu spüren.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich genieße Partner*innensex.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mein sexuelles Vergnügen ist unbedeutend.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich finde es erregend, meine*n Sexualpartner*in zum Sex zu verführen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich weiß mein Sexleben so zu gestalten, dass ich es wirklich genieße.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Ich erlebe sexuelles Vergnügen in meinem Leben.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beim Sex genieße ich die Nähe meines*meiner Sexualpartner*in.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich genieße es, sexuelle Empfindungen in meinem Körper zu spüren.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich genieße es, zu masturbieren.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Es erfüllt mich, wenn mein*e Sexualpartner*in beim Sex genießt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beim Sex genieße ich die Zuneigung zwischen mir und meinem*meiner Sexualpartner*in.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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G5

28. Im folgenden Abschnitt geht es um Ihre persönliche Einschätzung verschiedener Verhaltensweisen. Bitte lesen Sie jede Aussage aufmerksam durch und geben Sie an, bei wem Sie das jeweilige Verhalten eher akzeptieren würden.

	Sehr viel eher von Frauen	Eher von Frauen	Von beiden gleich	Eher von Männern	Sehr viel eher von Männern
Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie großen Gefallen an Sex findet?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie mehrere Partner*innen hat?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher den Konsum von Pornografie?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie in derselben Zeitspanne mit verschiedenen Sexualpartner*innen ein Verhältnis hat?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie die Initiative für eine sexuelle Interaktion ergreift?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie sich häufig auf unverbindliche Beziehungen einlässt?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Von wem akzeptieren Sie eher, dass er*sie sich auf jemanden einlässt, zu dem*der keine emotionale Bindung besteht?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

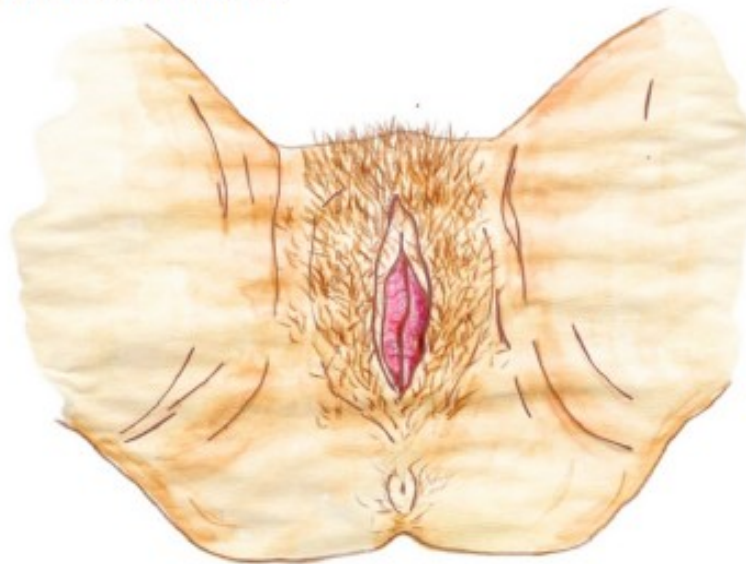
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G52

29. Im folgenden Abschnitt geht es wieder um Ihre persönliche Einschätzung verschiedener Verhaltensweisen. Bitte lesen Sie jede Aussage aufmerksam durch.

	stimme überhaupt nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	stimme eher wenig zu	stimme eher zu	stimme größtenteils zu	stimme völlig zu
Männer mögen Sex mehr als Frauen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Männer lassen sich durch Sex stärker ablenken als Frauen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Frauen verspüren seltener ein Verlangen nach Sex als Männer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Frauen denken weniger oft an Sex als Männer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Im folgenden Teil des Fragebogens wird Ihr Wissen über die Klitoris und damit verbundene sexuelle Themen abgefragt. Bitte verwenden Sie zum Beantworten der Fragen **keine Hilfsmittel** (z. B. das Internet), damit die Ergebnisse der Studie nicht verfälscht werden. Wie zu Beginn angekündigt, werden Ihre **Daten anonymisiert** erhoben und gespeichert, sodass kein Rückschluss auf Ihre Person möglich ist.

30. Die Abbildung zeigt eine:



© Zoe Rosa Lorenz

- ☐ Vagina
- ☐ Vulva
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

31. Die Größe der Klitoris entspricht ungefähr der Größe einer Erbse.

- ☐ Richtig
- ☐ Falsch
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

32. Die Klitoris erigiert, wenn sie verstärkt durchblutet wird (z.B. bei sexueller Erregung).

- ☐ Richtig
- ☐ Falsch
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

33. Die Klitoris hat eine Vorhaut, eine Eichel und einen Schaft.

- ☐ Richtig
- ☐ Falsch. Das trifft auf den Penis zu.
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

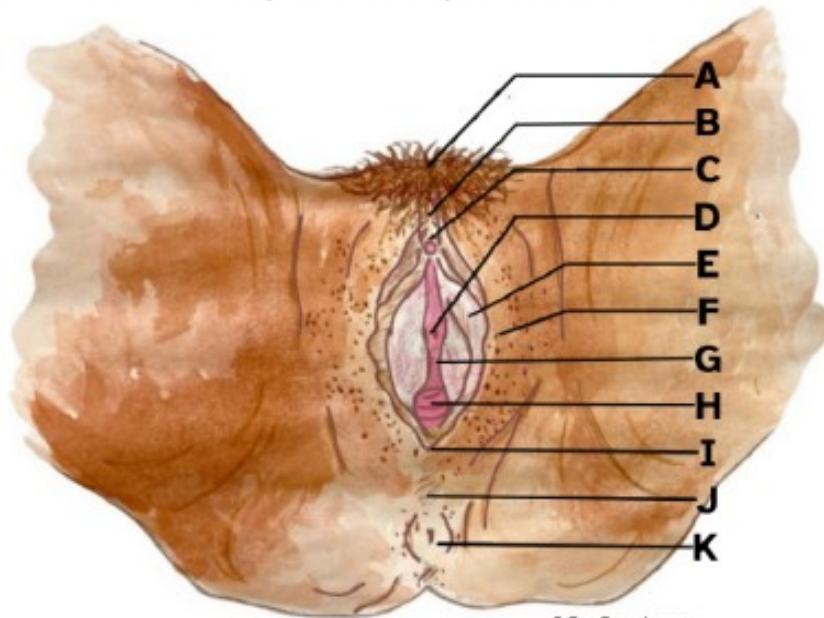
34. Die Klitoris ist ausschließlich für das Lustempfinden da.

KQ95

- ☐ Richtig
- ☐ Falsch
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

35. Wo findest du die Klitorispele? Wähle den passenden Buchstaben aus.

KQ96



- ☐ A
- ☐ B
- ☐ C
- ☐ D
- ☐ E
- ☐ F
- ☐ G
- ☐ H
- ☐ I
- ☐ J
- ☐ K
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

36. Bei welcher Sexualpraktik erleben die meisten Menschen mit Vulva am wahrscheinlichsten einen Orgasmus?

KQ97

- ☐ Oralsex
- ☐ Geschlechtsverkehr
- ☐ Analsex
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

KQ98

37. An jedem Orgasmus ist die Klitoris beteiligt.

- ☐ Richtig
- ☐ Falsch
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

38. Ein Orgasmus ist entweder klitoral oder vaginal.

100%

- ☐ Richtig
- ☐ Falsch
- ☐ Ehrlicherweise müsste ich jetzt raten.

Letzte Seite

Die Studie ist beendet, Sie können dieses Fenster nun schließen.

Wenn Sie Interesse an den Ergebnissen der Untersuchung oder an den Antworten des Klitoris-Quiz haben, wenden Sie sich an die unten angegebene Mail-Adresse. Die Antworten auf das Quiz werden verschickt, sobald die Erhebung beendet ist. Ebenso können dort Fragen und Anregungen gestellt werden. Ich bedanke mich bereits im Voraus für Ihr Interesse und Engagement.

E-Mail: rueckmeldung.masterarbeit@gmx.at

Löse den folgenden Survey Code unter <https://www.surveycircle.com> ein und erhalte durch SurveyCircle kostenlos Teilnehmer für deine Studie: XZLR-64AW-PME4-LBYQ

Survey Code mit einem Klick einlösen: <https://www.surveycircle.com/XZLR-64AW-PME4-LBYQ/>